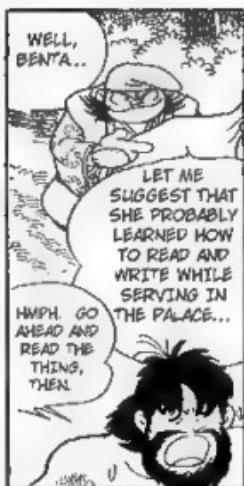


YOU BIG OAF,
WHAT WERE YOU
THINKIN'!?
TAKING ON A
COUPLE OF
SAMURAI BY
YOURSELF, AN'
TRYIN' TO
ESCAPE...?!





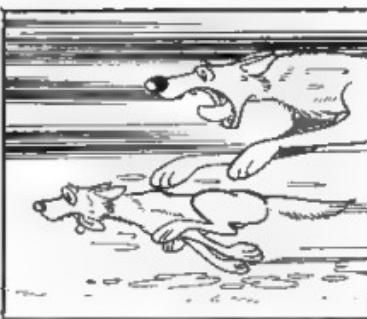










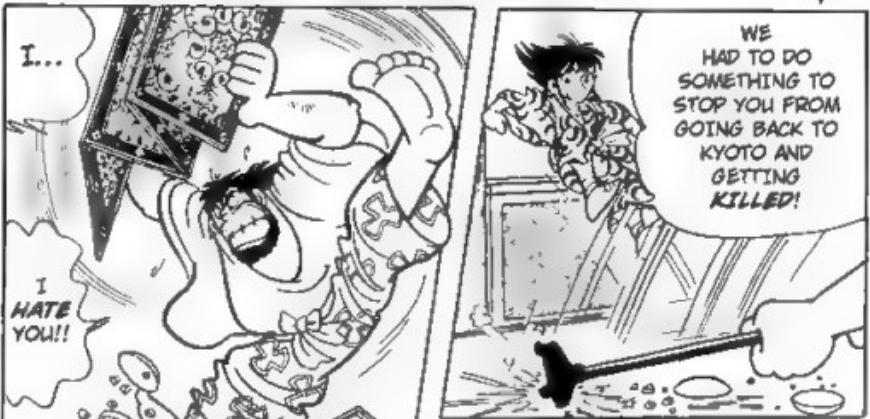


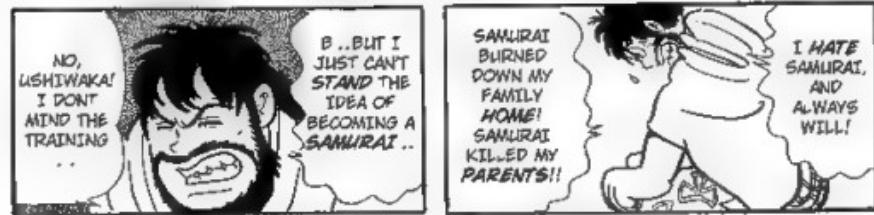






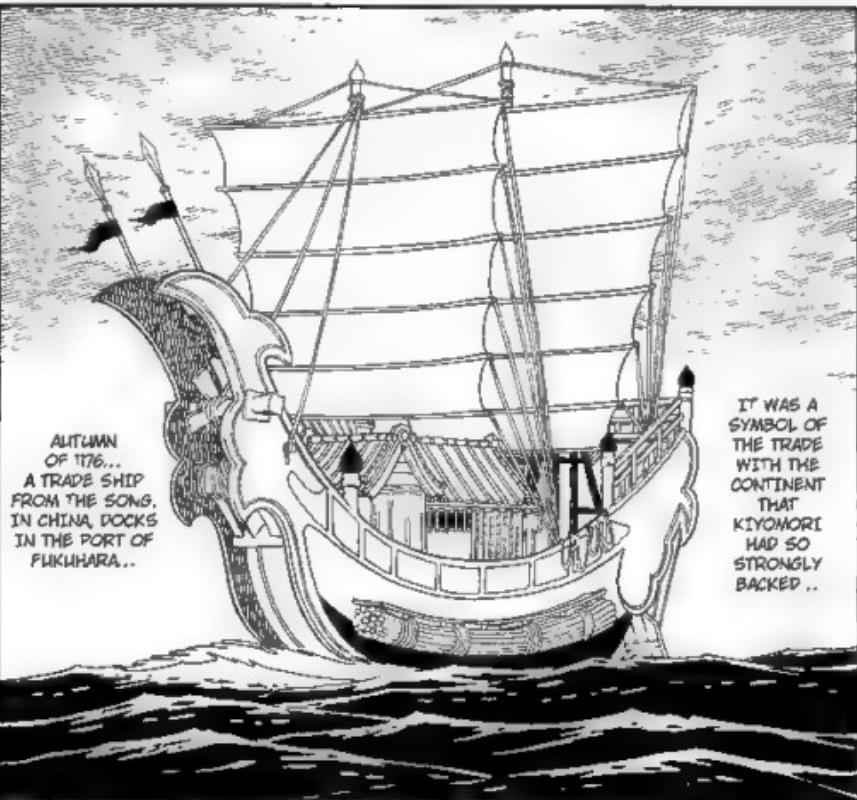




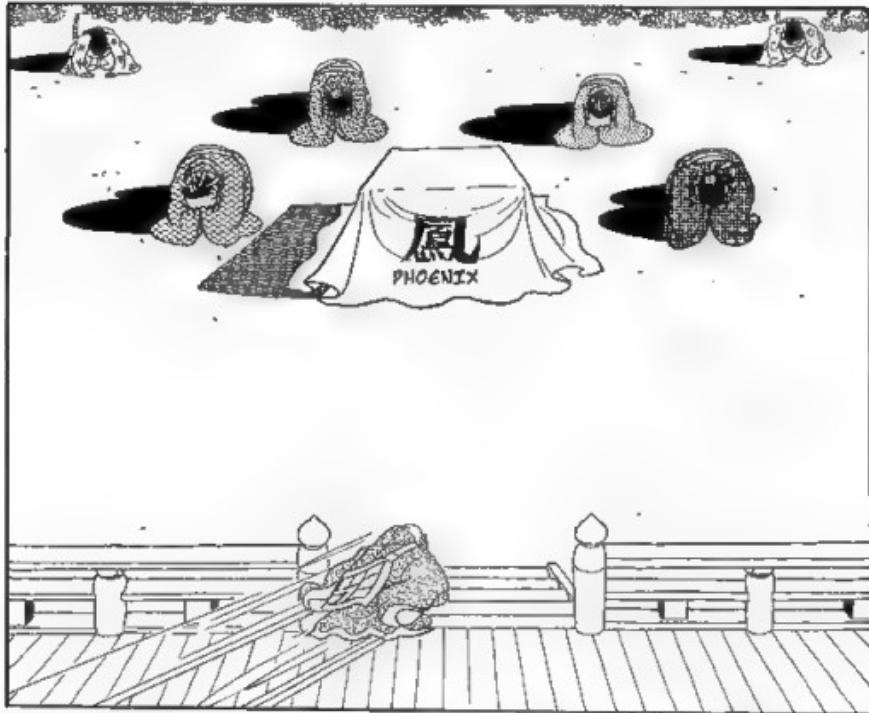


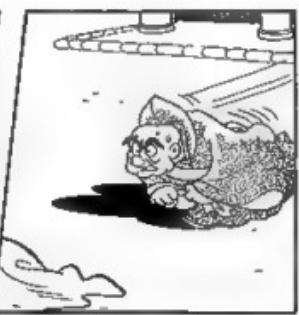
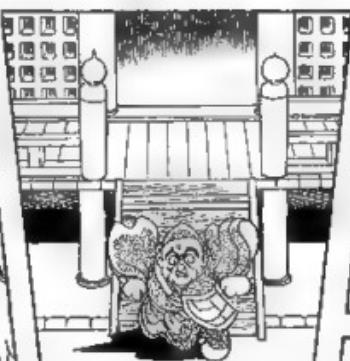
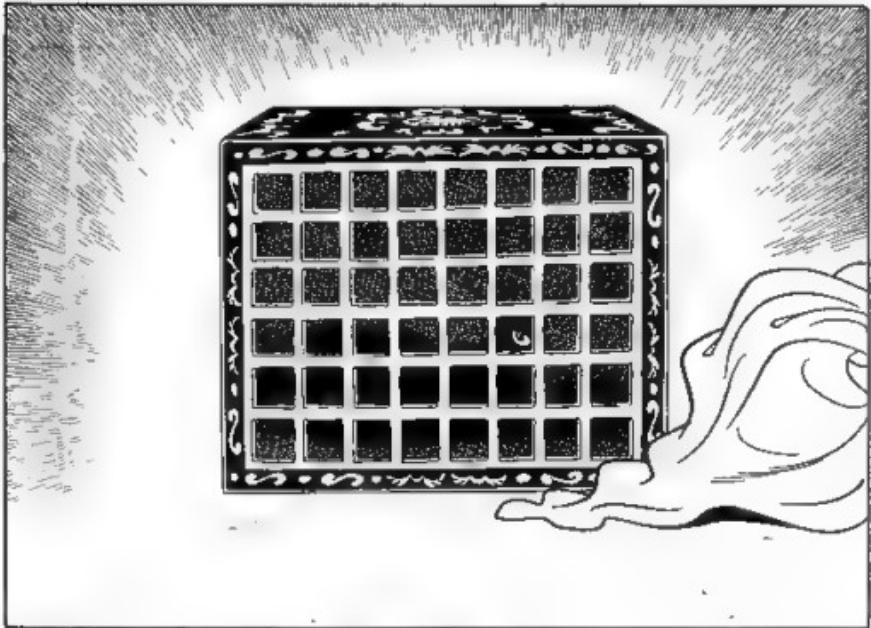
*THE KANJI CHARACTERS USED FOR BENTA'S NEW NAME ARE A LINGUISTIC PLIN, THAT CAN ALSO BE READ AS "MOUNTAIN POTATO BENTA FROM IMORI"

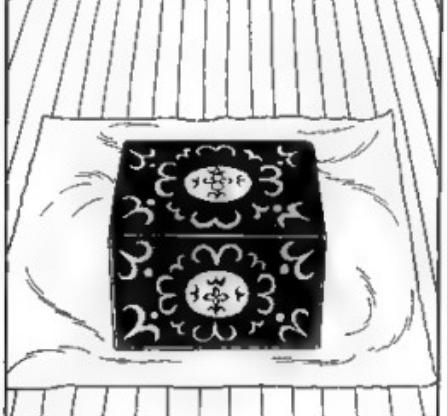


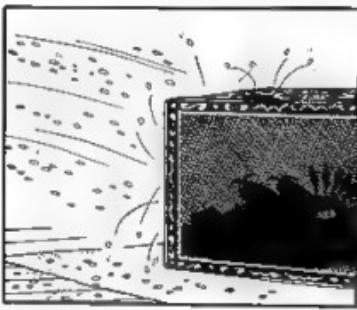


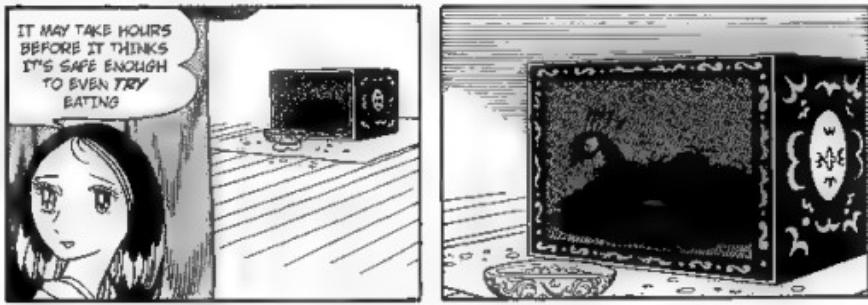
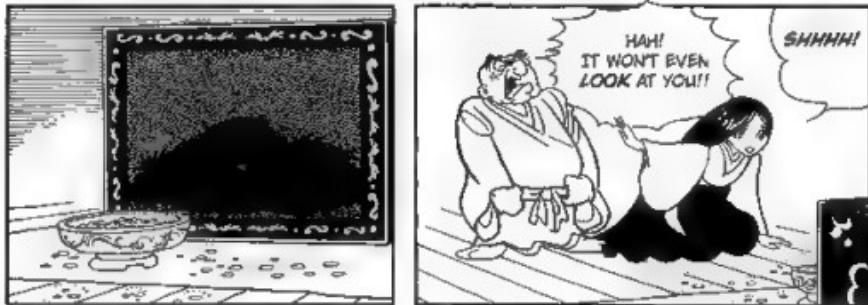


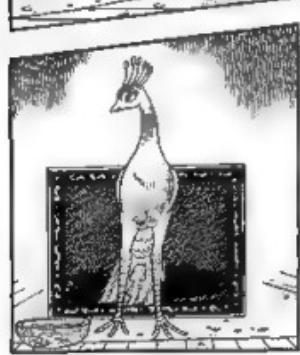
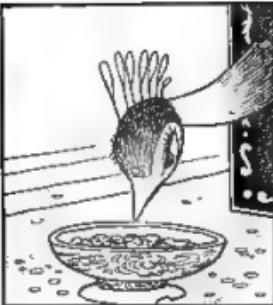
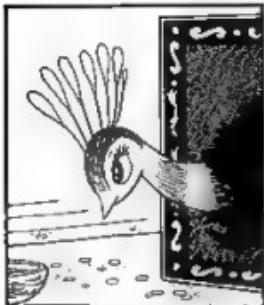


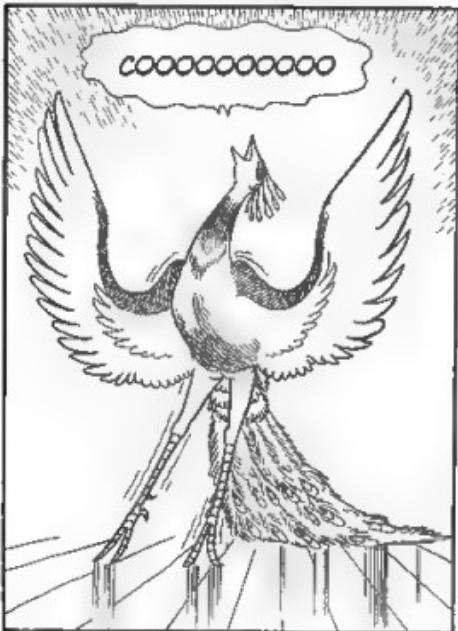
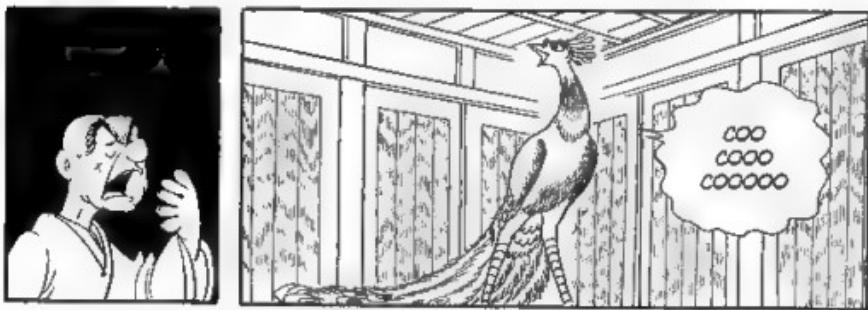
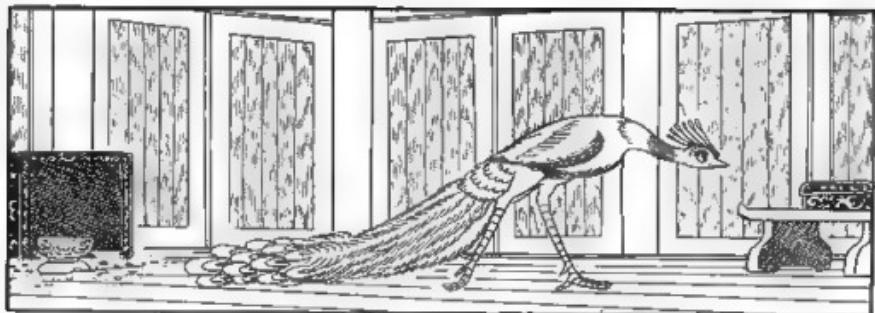


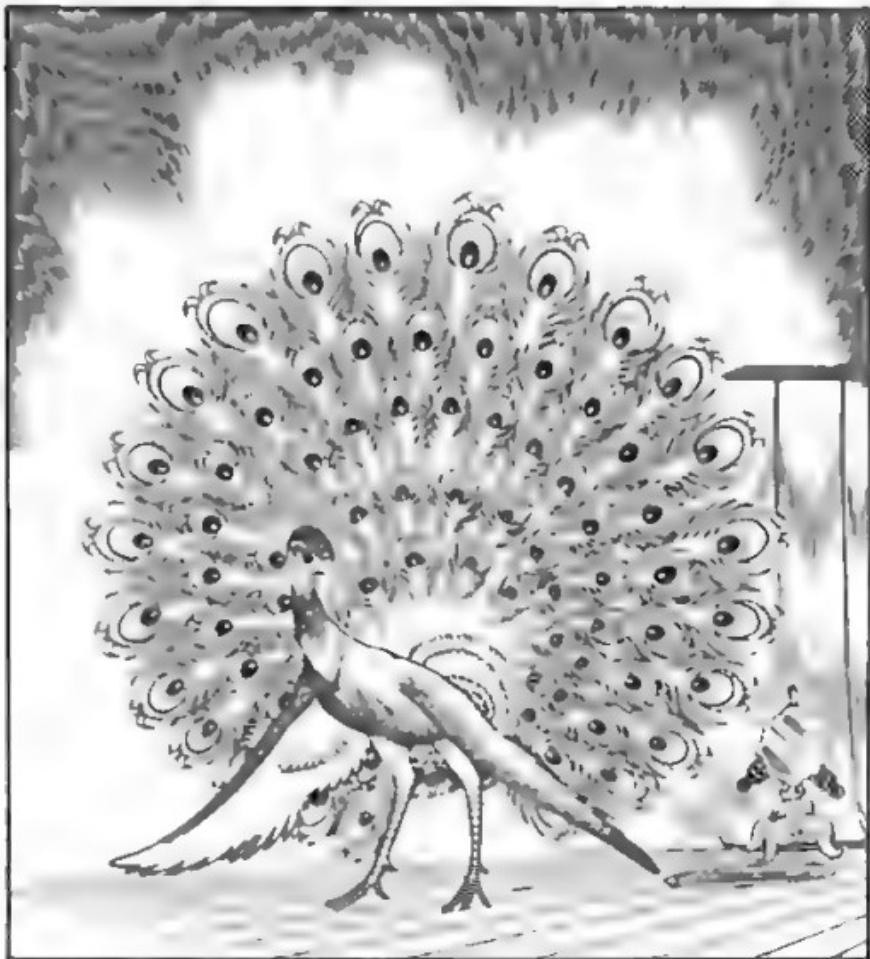
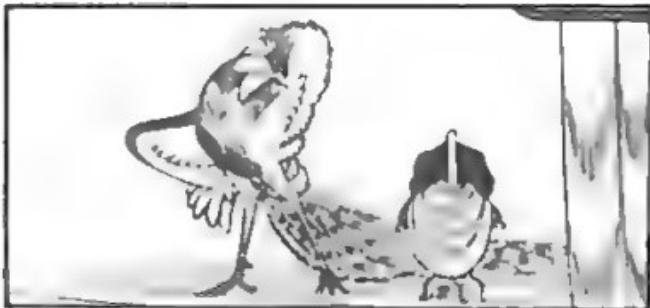


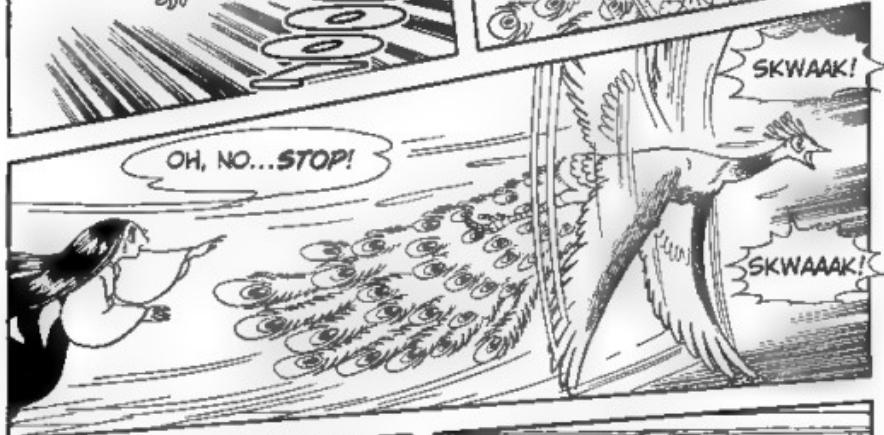


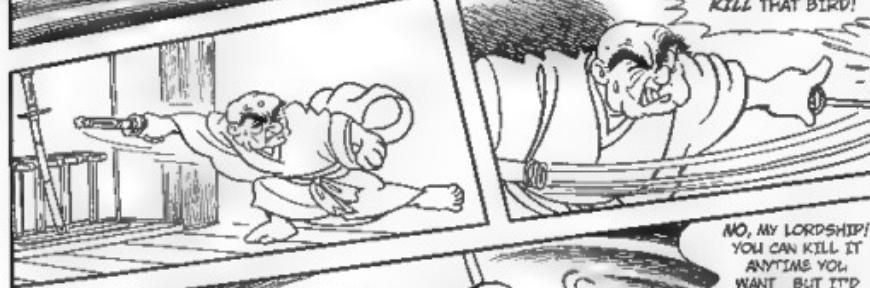






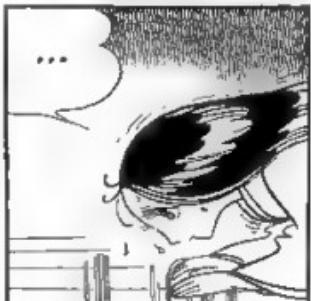


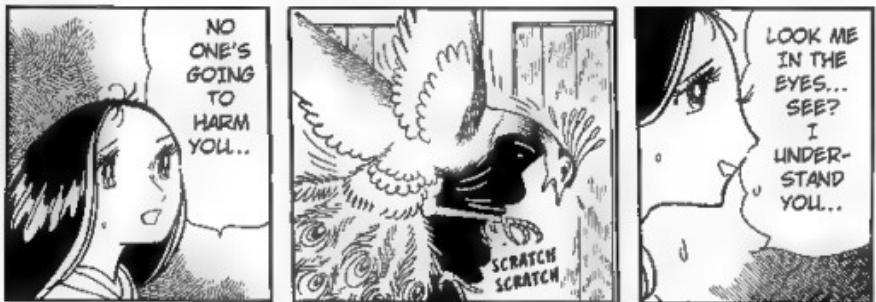






KEEP IT UP, WILL YOU?
DON'T HOLD BACK.
LET ME HAVE IT,
ANYTIME! I LIKE
THE SOUND
OF IT!





I WONDER IF THIS IS REALLY THE BIRD OF FIRE... THE LEGENDARY BIRD CALLED THE PHOENIX THAT THEY SAY LIVES FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS? I WONDER IF THE STORY IS EVEN TRUE? SOMEHOW, I DOUBT IT. THIS SOFTNESS...THIS FEARFUL TREMBLING... REMINDS ME OF ALL THE TIMES I HELD WILD BIRDS AND PHEASANTS THAT BENTA USED TO BRING BACK FROM THE MOUNTAINS. I CAN'T BELIEVE THE BIRD OF FIRE WOULD FEEL SO ORDINARY...IT JUST DOESN'T SEEM RIGHT.



I EVEN WONDER IF HIS LORDSHIP TRULY BELIEVES IN THE STORY.



WHY I'LL BET YOU'RE JUST A COUSIN OF THE ORDINARY BIRDS IN THE MOUNTAINS. I'LL BET THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT YOU COME FROM A FOREIGN LAND AND HAVE PRETTIER FEATHERS, RIGHT?

YOU'RE JUST AN ORDINARY BIRD, AREN'T YOU?

I WONDER WHAT HIS
LORDSHIP WOULD DO
IF I TOLD HIM THIS
IS JUST AN
ORDINARY BIRD...?

WOULD HE KILL
ME...? OR WOULD
HE FALL ILL
FROM THE
SHOCK...?

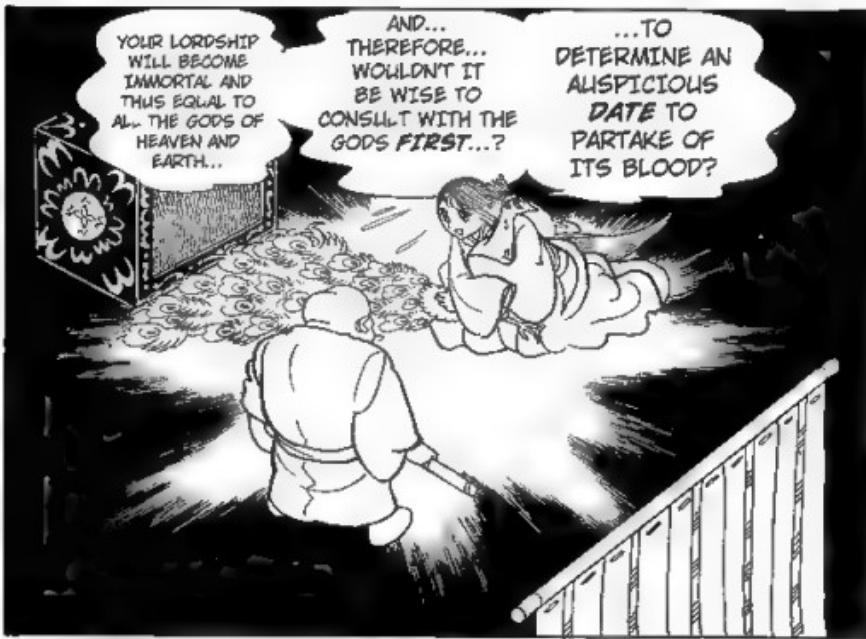
SINCE HE'S SO
OBSESSED
WITH THE IDEA
OF DRINKING
THE BLOOD
OF THIS
BIRD...

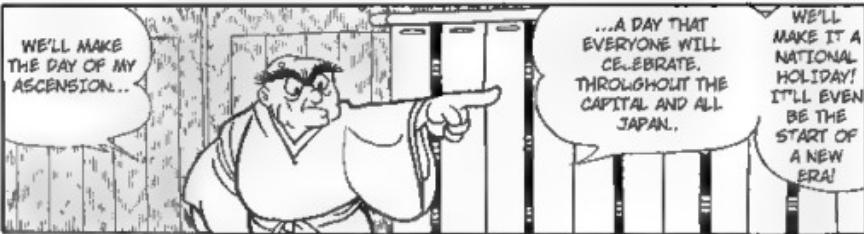
...HE'D
PROBABLY DIE
IF IT WERE
TAKEN AWAY.

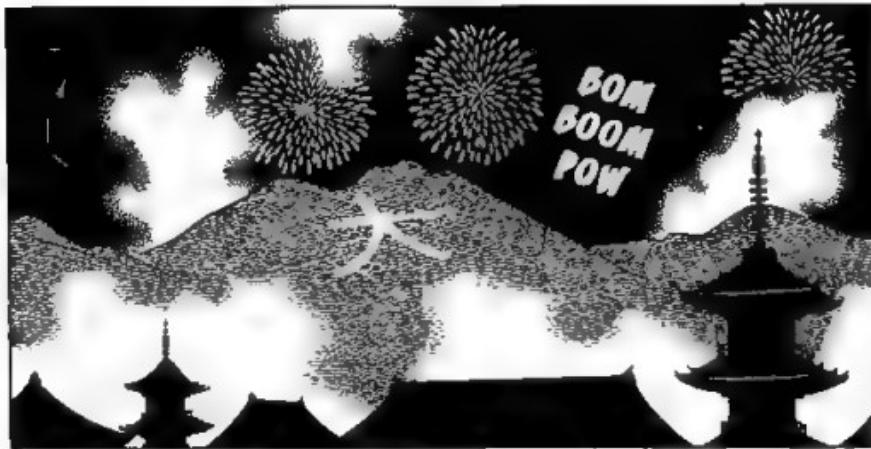
AND IF THAT
HAPPENED, THE
TAIRA CLAN
WOULD LOSE
ITS MOST
VALUABLE
MEMBER...

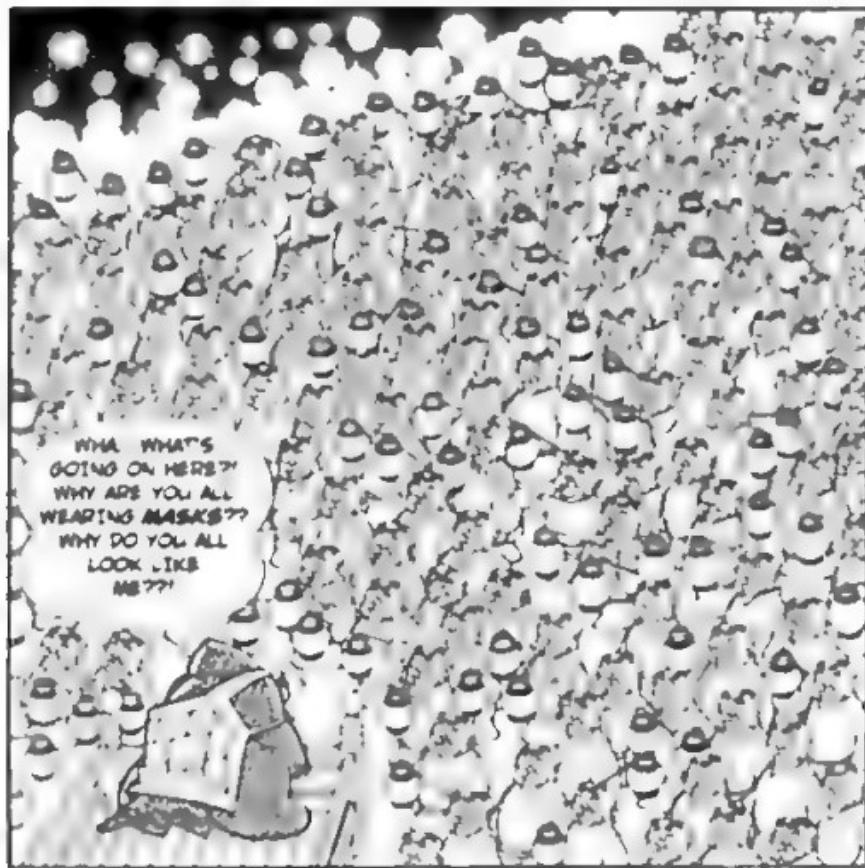
AND IT ALL
DEPENDS
ON ME...



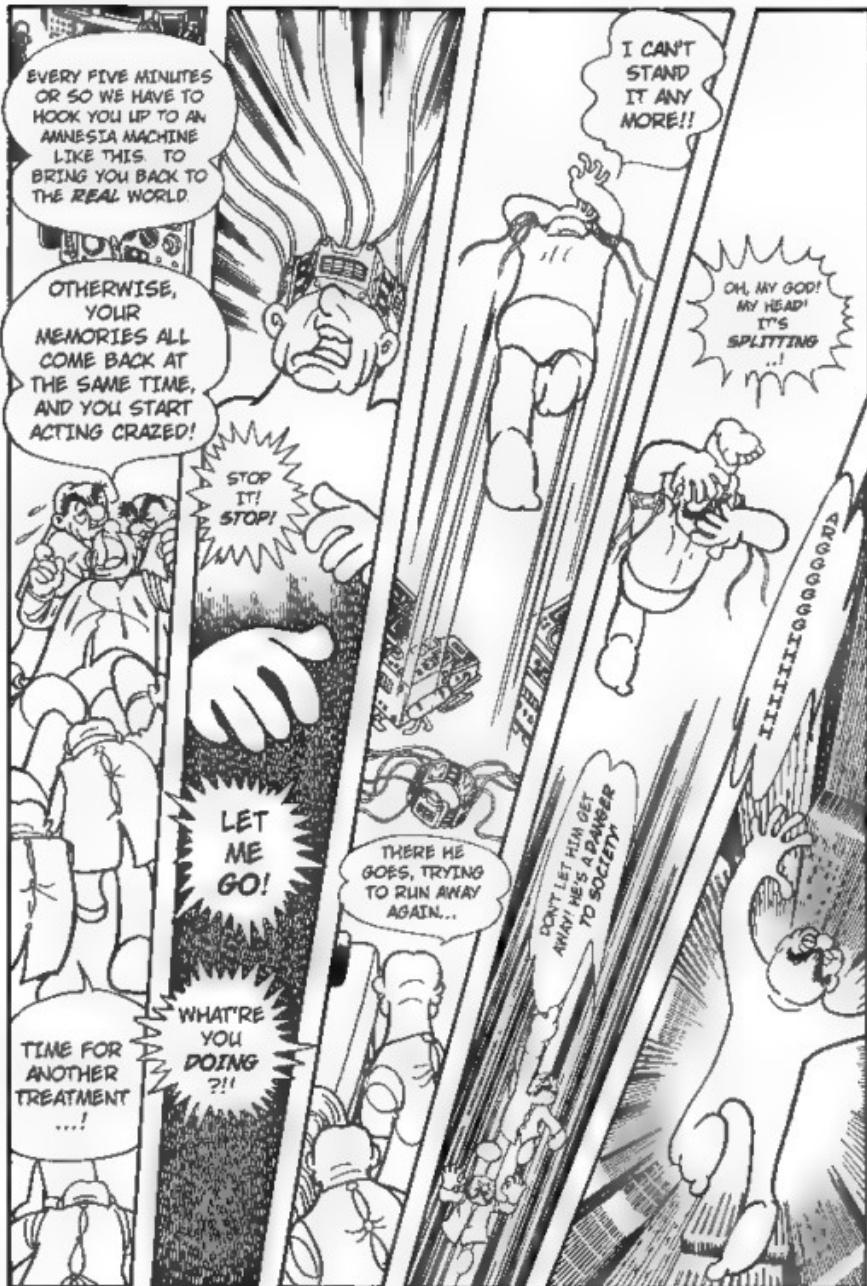
















YOU WILL LIVE AS
LONG AS THE
UNIVERSE
ITSELF. JUST AS
YOU WISHED.

UNTIL
THE END
OF TIME.
TEE HEE...

YOU WILL LIVE
ALL BY YOURSELF
FLOATING IN THE
VOID LIKE A
STAR.

B...BUT HOW
CAN THAT BE...?
THAT'S ABSURD!

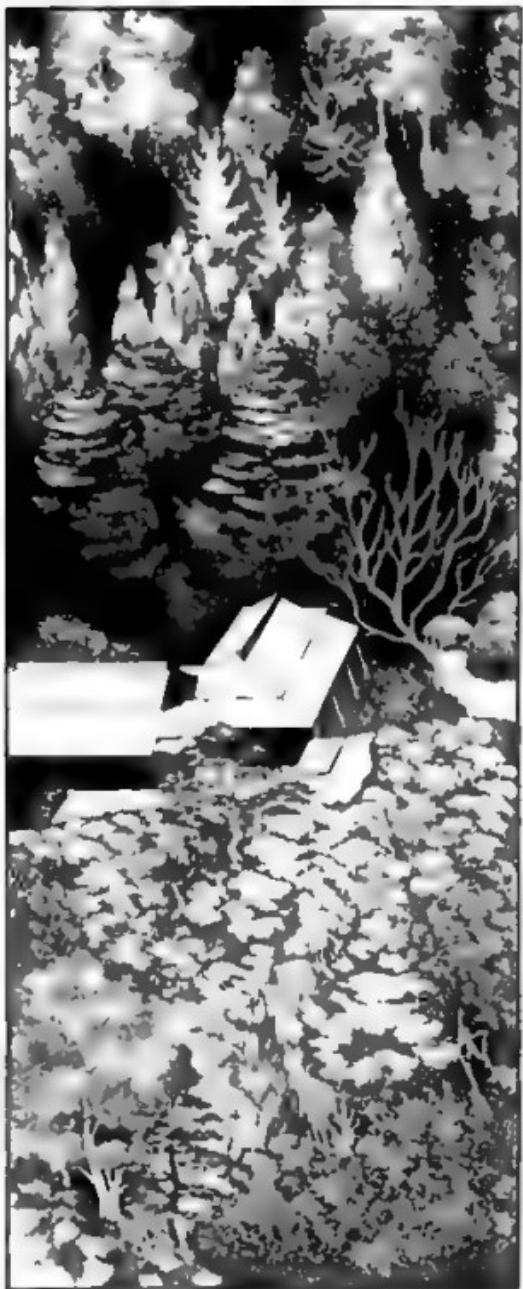
WHAT'S THE
GOOD OF ME
LIVING FOREVER,
IF I'M TO BE ALL
ALONE...?

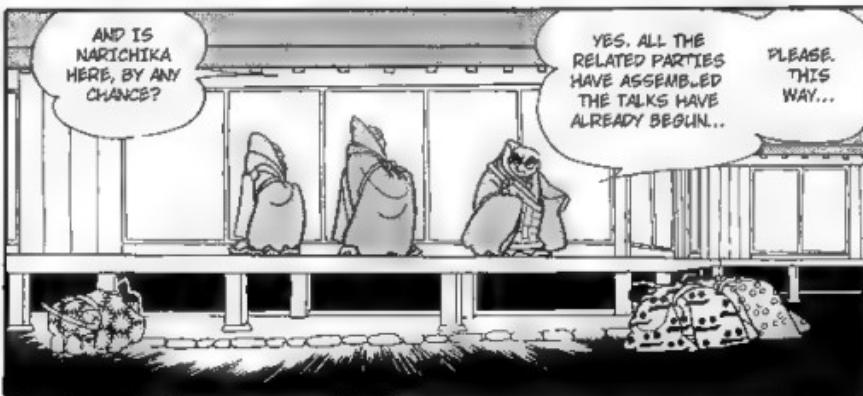
JUST GET
IT OVER WITH!
KILL ME!!
PLEASE!
KILL ME!!

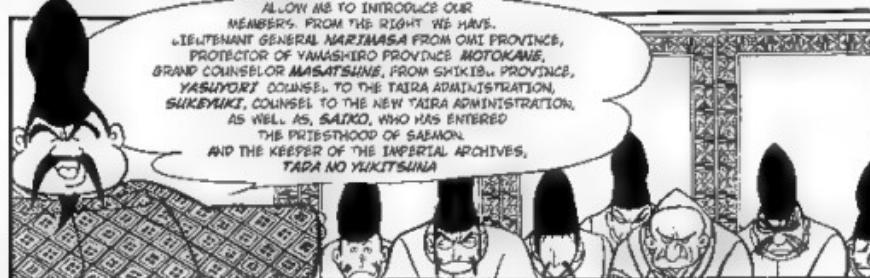
GASP

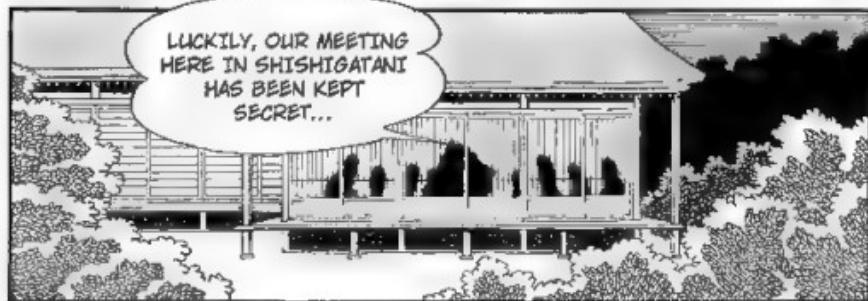
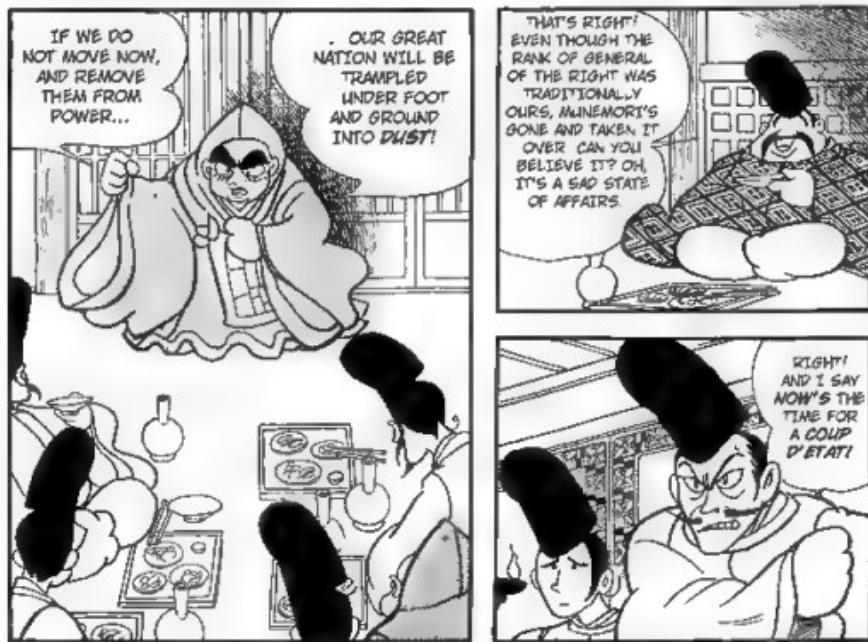
YOUR
LORDSHIP!
ARE YOU ALL
RIGHT?

HAVE YOU HAD
ANOTHER
NIGHTMARE?









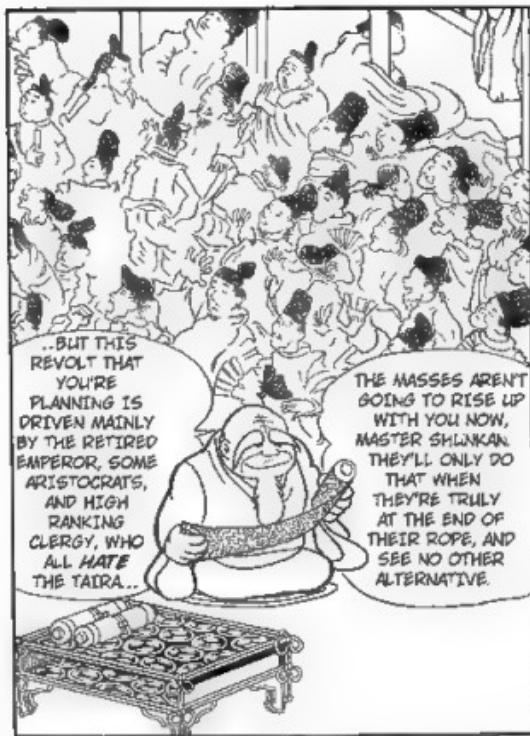












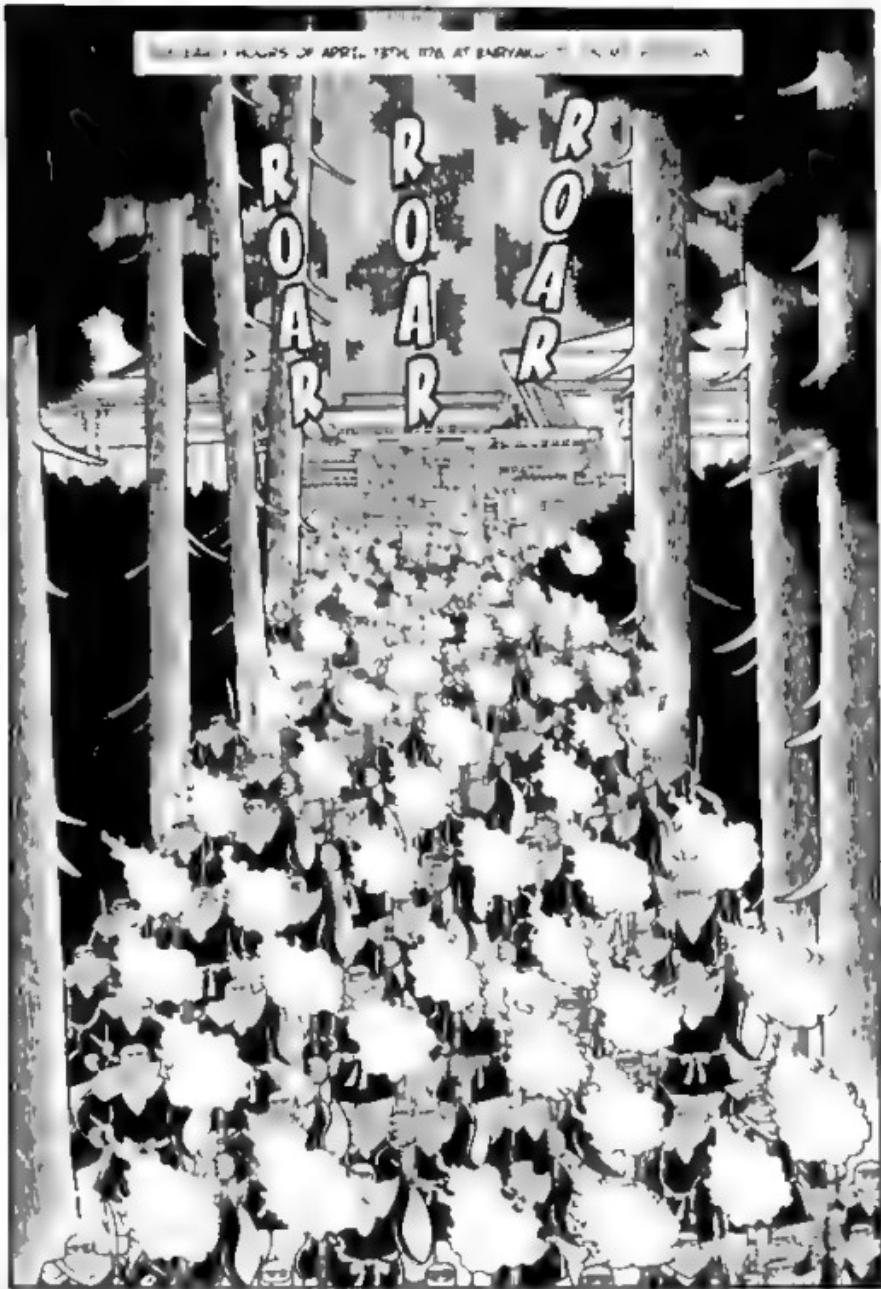
THE MASSES AREN'T GOING TO RISE UP WITH YOU NOW, MASTER SHINKAN. THEY'LL ONLY DO THAT WHEN THEY'RE TRULY AT THE END OF THEIR ROPE, AND SEE NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE.





IN A TRULY ODD COINCIDENCE, THE DAY KIYOMORI CHOSE TO DRINK THE BIRD'S BLOOD WAS THE SAME DAY THAT THE SHISHIGATANI CONSPIRATORS HAD CHOSEN TO PUT HIM TO DEATH. BUT OF COURSE, THIS WAS ALL UNKNOWN TO KIYOMORI, OBVIOUSLY, AND THE REST OF THE TAIRA CLAN...





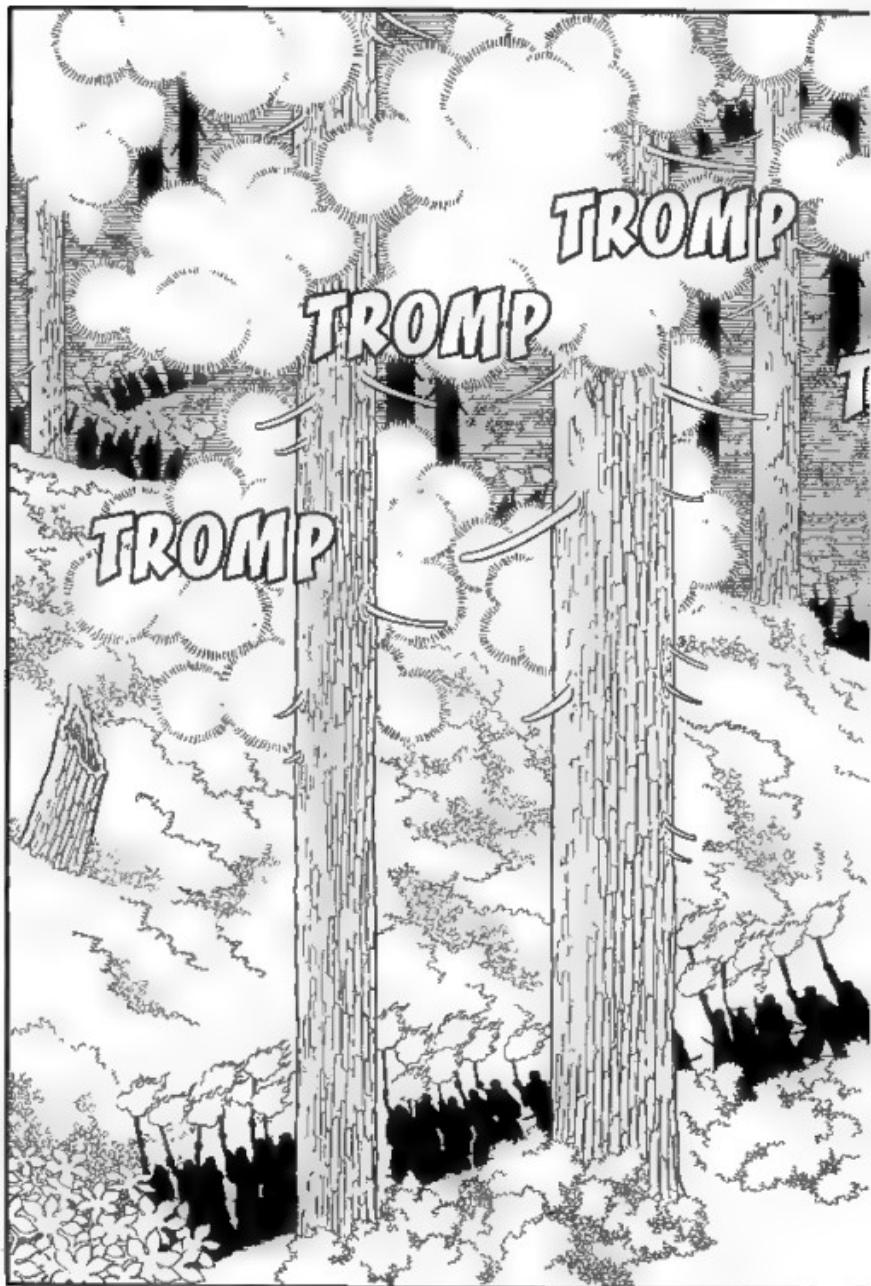
AS YOU'VE ALREADY HEARD, MEN, THOSE TWO SHAMELESS AND COWARDLY BROTHERS, FUJIWARA NO MOROTAKA AND MOROTSUNE, HAVE BURNED ONE OF THE HIYOSHI SHRINES!

THIS IS YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF CORRUPT GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES, ABUSING THEIR POWER, AND TRYING TO CRUSH THE RIGHTS OF RELIGIOUS ADOLYTES IN THEIR HOLY PLACES OF LEARNING!

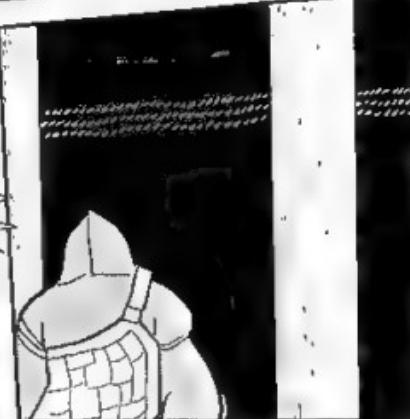
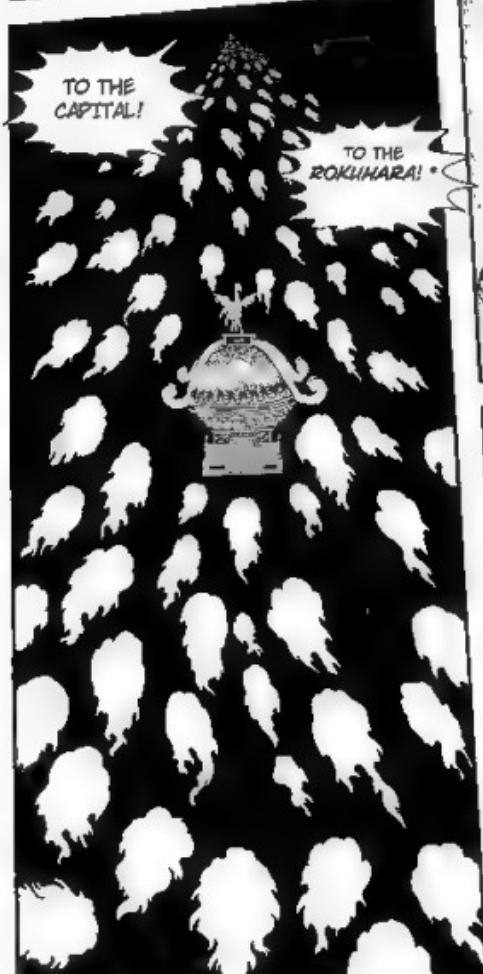
ONWARD!
TO THE
CAPITAL!!

O MULTITUDES OF FELLOW BELIEVERS! IT IS FINALLY TIME FOR US TO MARCH ON THE CAPITAL, AND DESTROY THE AUTHORITIES!

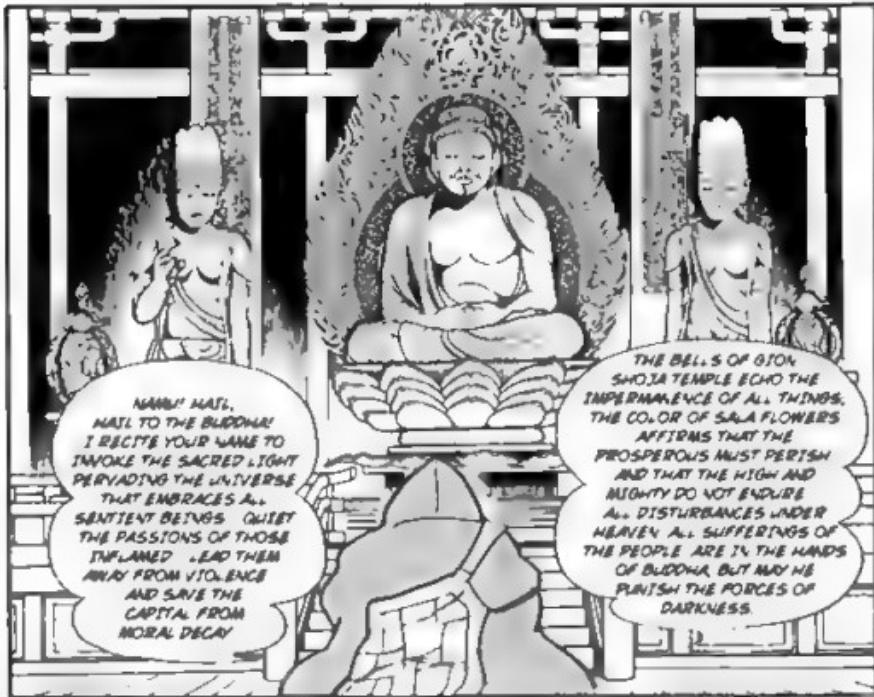
HOORAAH!!!





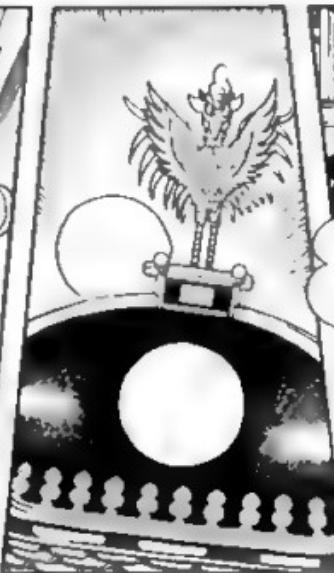
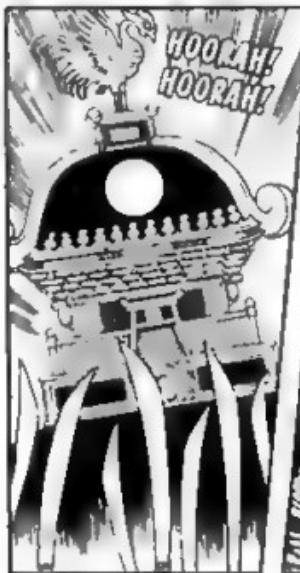


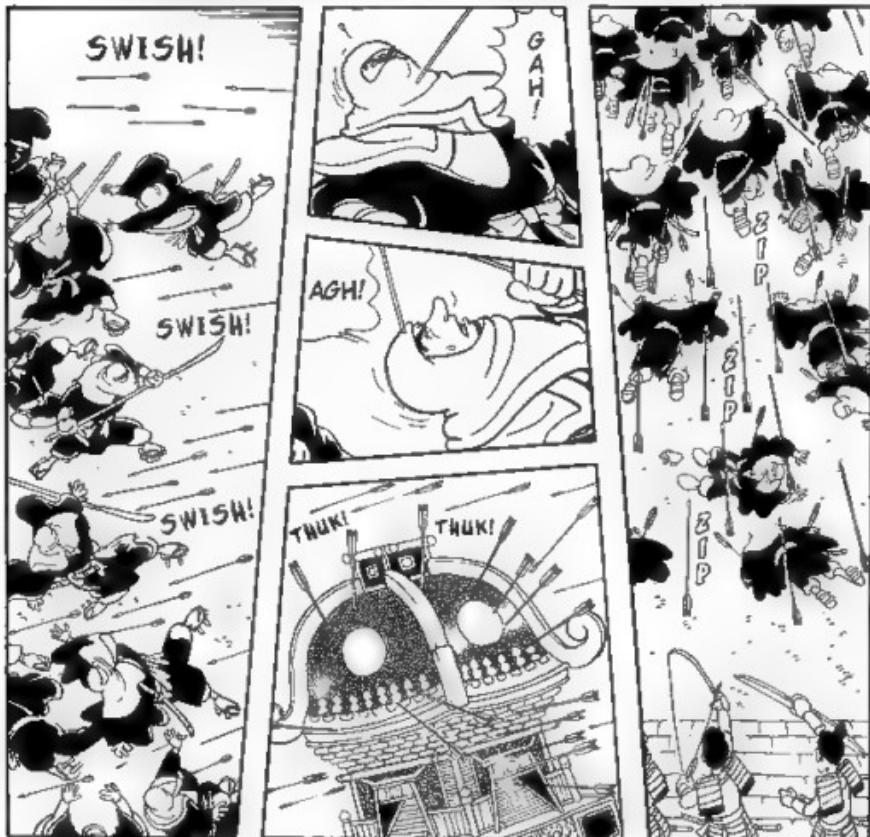
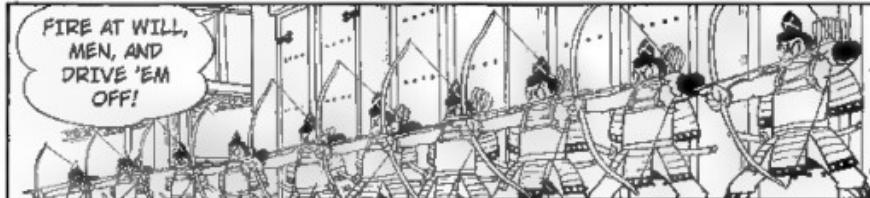
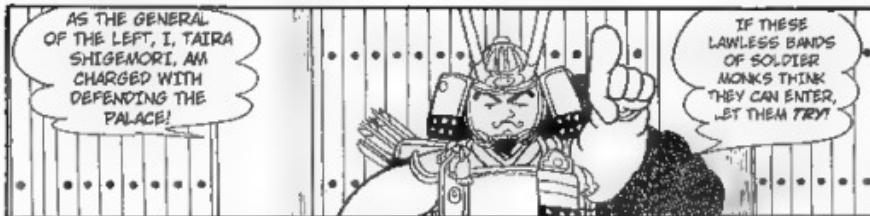


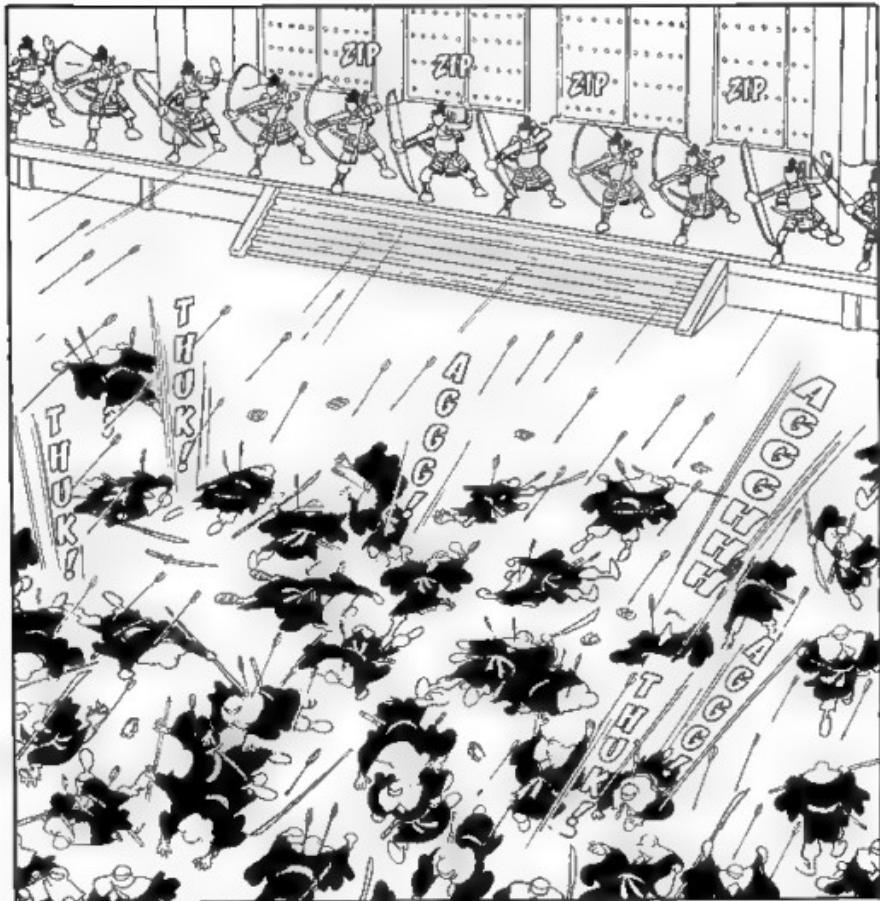


NAMU NAI,
HAIL TO THE BUDDHA!
I RECITE YOUR NAME TO
INVOKE THE SACRED LIGHT
PERVADING THE UNIVERSE
THAT ENBRACES ALL
SENTIENT BEINGS. QUIET
THE PASSIONS OF THOSE
INFLAMED... LEAD THEM
AWAY FROM VIOLENCE
AND SAVE THE
CAPITAL FROM
MORAL DECAY

THE BELLS OF OTO,
SHOZU TEMPLE ECHO THE
IMPERMANENCE OF ALL THINGS.
THE COLOR OF SALA FLOWERS
AFFIRMS THAT THE
PROSPEROUS MUST PERISH
AND THAT THE HIGH AND
MIGHTY DO NOT ENDURE.
ALL DISTURBANCES UNDER
HEAVEN ARE SUFFERINGS OF
THE PEOPLE. ARE IN THE HANDS
OF BUDDHA, BUT MAY HE
PUNISH THE FORCES OF
DARKNESS.





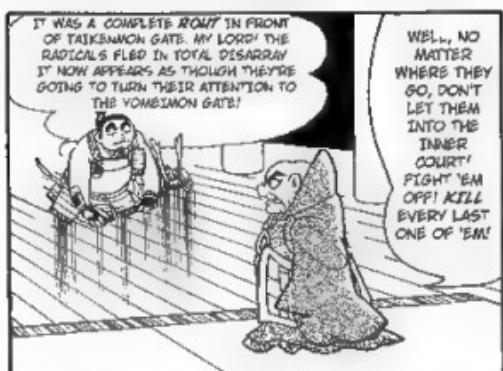


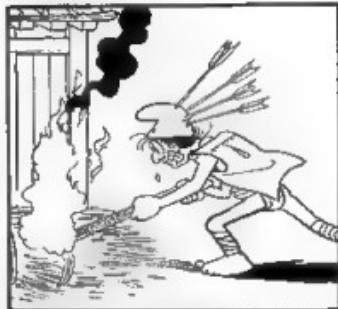
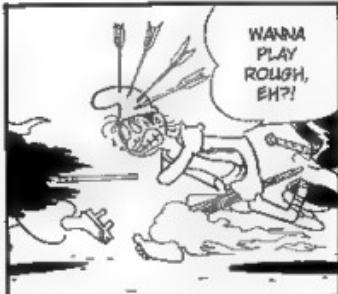
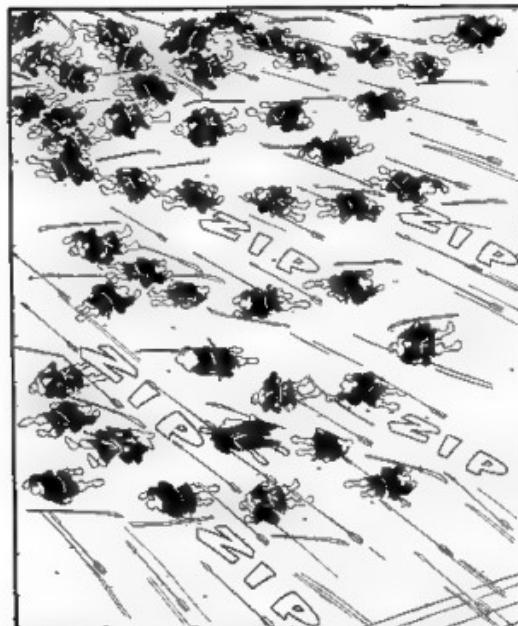
IT WAS A COMPLETE RAVAGE IN FRONT OF TAIKEMONMON GATE. MY LORD! THE RADICALS FLED IN TOTAL DISARRAY. IT NOW APPEARS AS THOUGH THEY'RE GOING TO TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO THE YONBUNMON GATE!

THE YONBUNMON GATE!

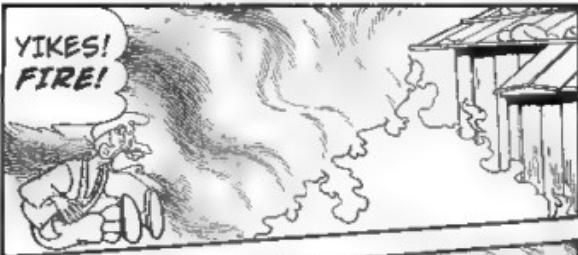
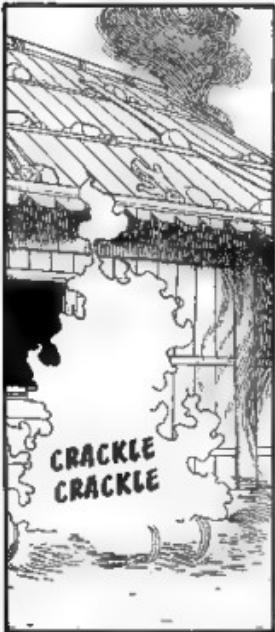
WELL, NO MATTER WHERE THEY GO, DON'T LET THEM INTO THE INNER COURTYARD! FIGHT 'EM OFF! KILL EVERY LAST ONE OF 'EM!

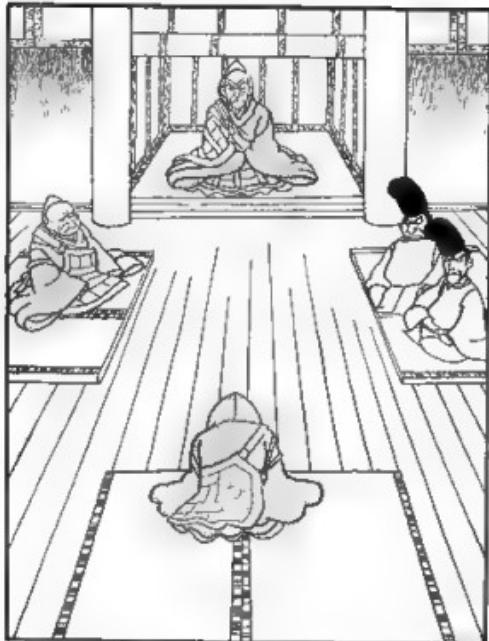
HUMPH.
AND THIS WAS
SUPPOSED TO BE
THE DAY I
CELEBRATED
DRINKING THE
BLOOD OF THE
FIREBIRD...

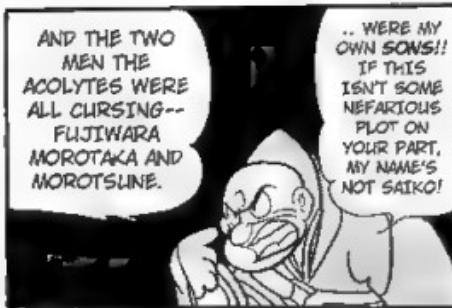




*IN ANCIENT TIMES, RESIDENTS OF THE TEMPLES INCLUDED NOT ONLY MONKS AND SCHOLARS, BUT ALSO A NUMBER OF OUTCASTS OF SOCIETY: THIEVES, ROBBERS AND THE LIKE. FOR THEM, PARTICIPATING IN THE MONKS' REBELLIONS WAS OFTEN LITTLE MORE THAN A CONVENIENT EXCUSE TO COMMIT ACTS OF LOOTING AND ARSON.









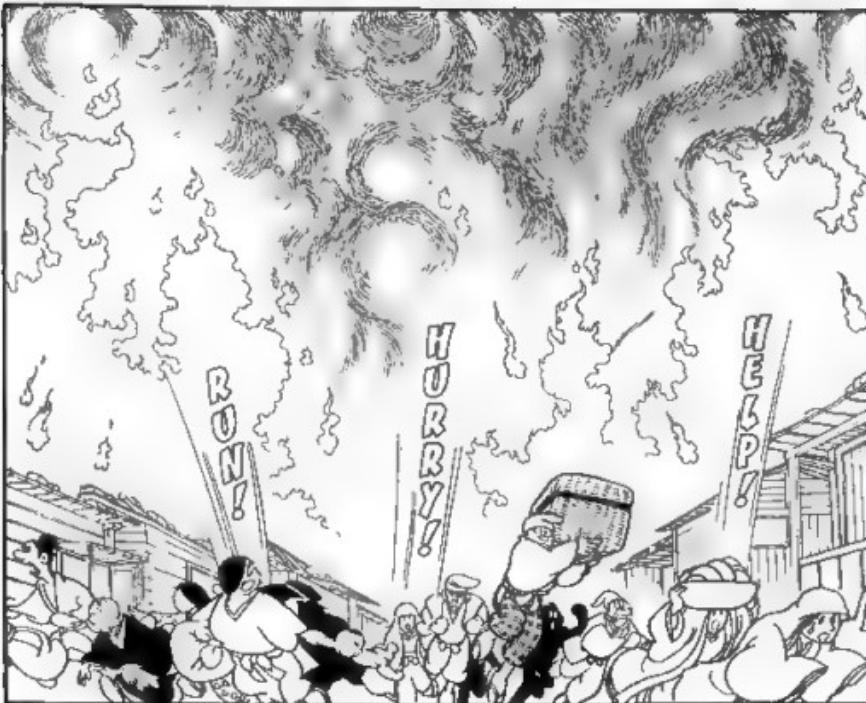
YOU WANT TO SILENCE ME BY BANISHING ME FROM THE CAPITAL, EH?

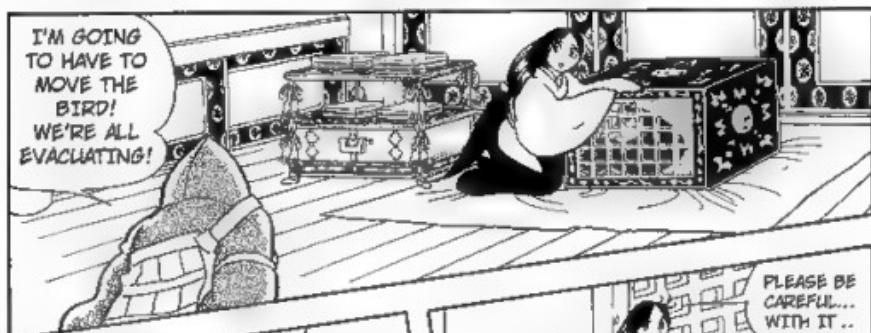
HAI. WELL, I SUPPOSE THAT MAKES A CERTAIN SENSE

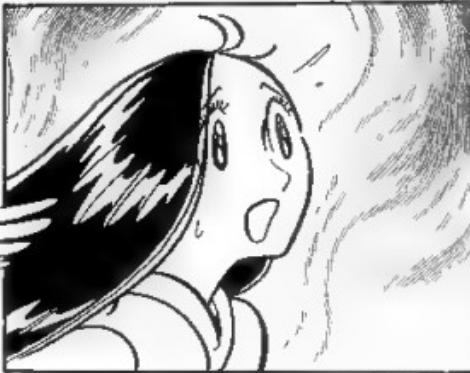




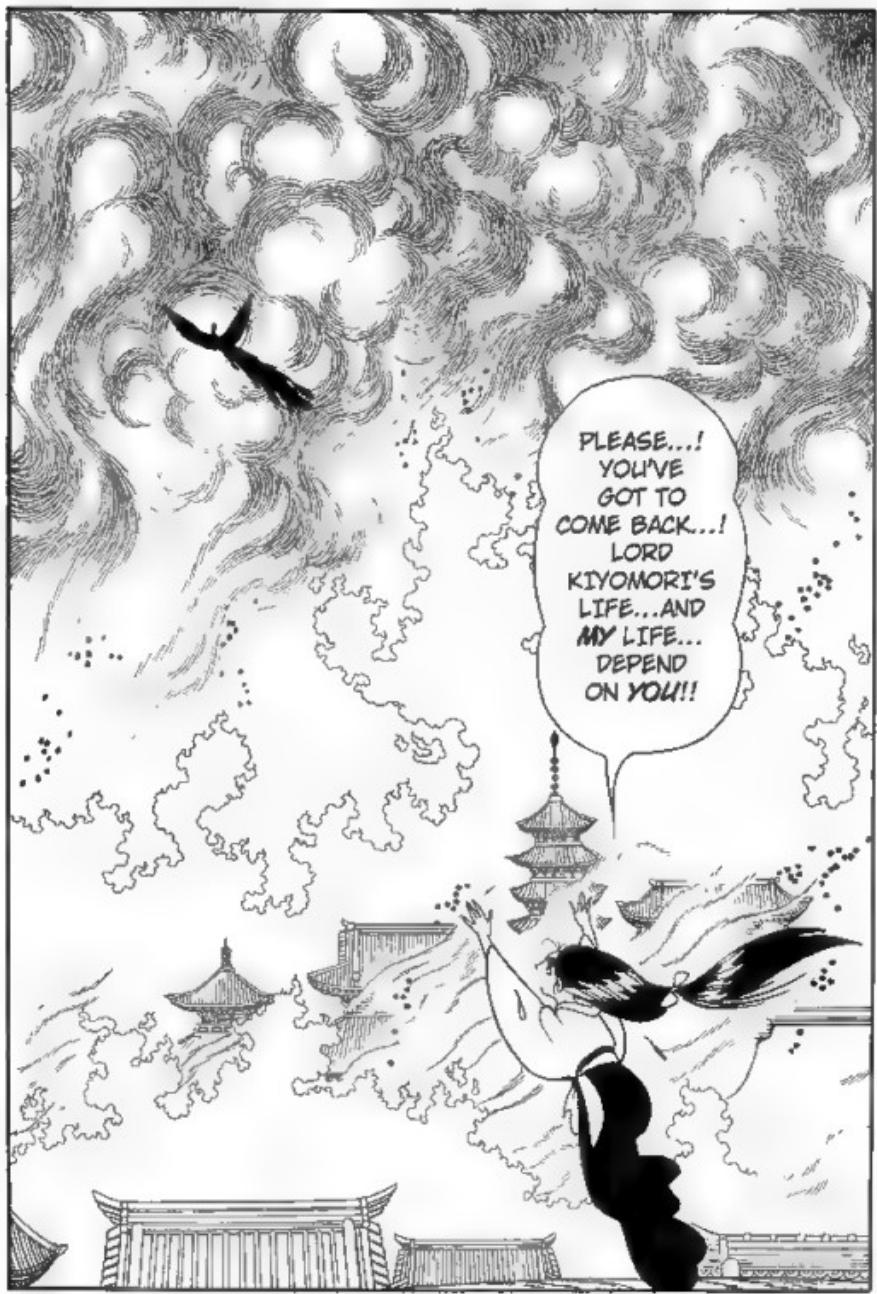
A STRONG WIND FANNED THE FLAMES THROUGH THE SOUTHEAST PORTION OF THE CAPITAL. FROM THERE, THE FIRE SPREAD QUICKLY, SPIRALING OUT FROM HIGHCHITOMI ROAD TO THE REST OF THE CAPITAL.

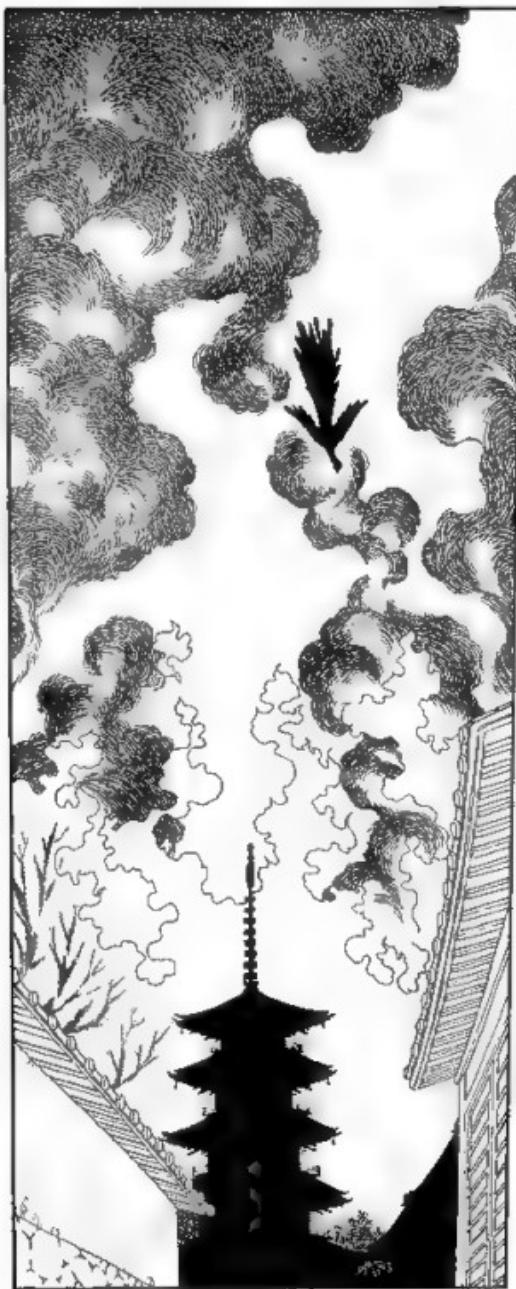


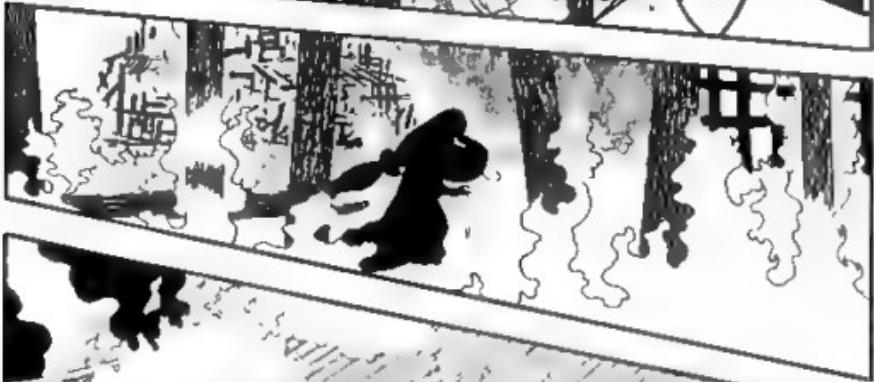


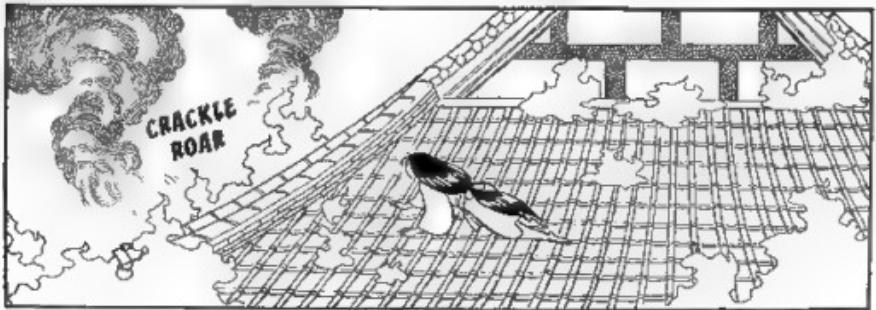
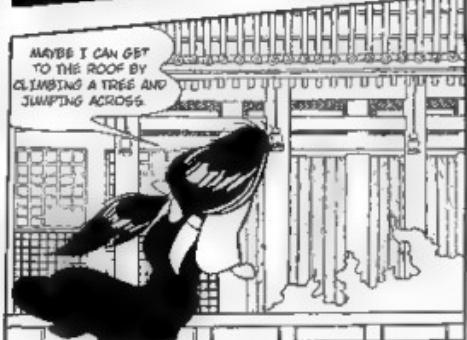
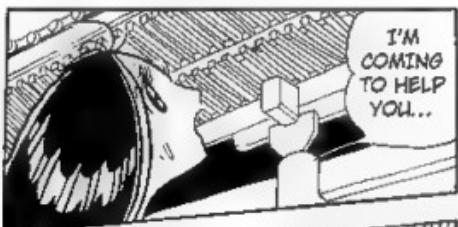
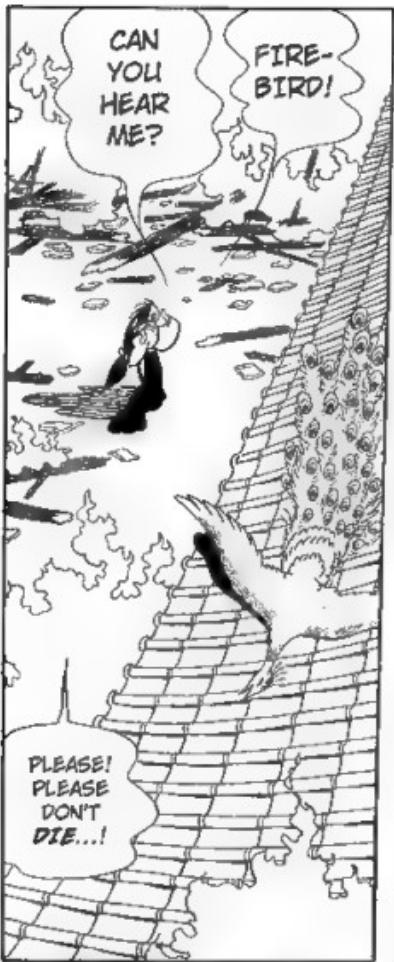


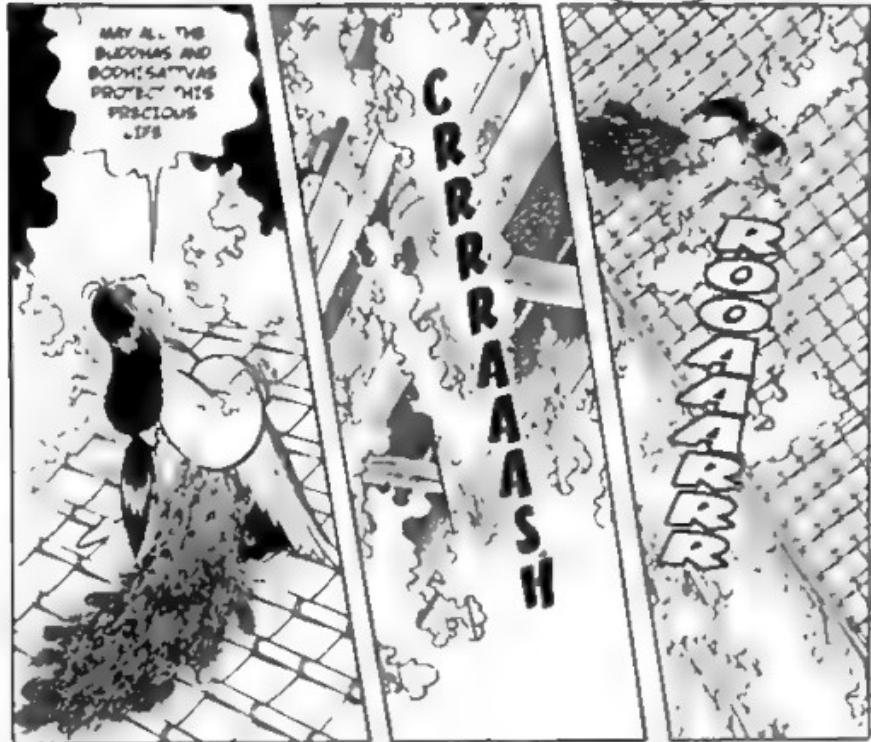
PLEASE...!
YOU'VE
GOT TO
COME BACK...!
LORD
KIYOMORI'S
LIFE...AND
MY LIFE...
DEPEND
ON YOU!!

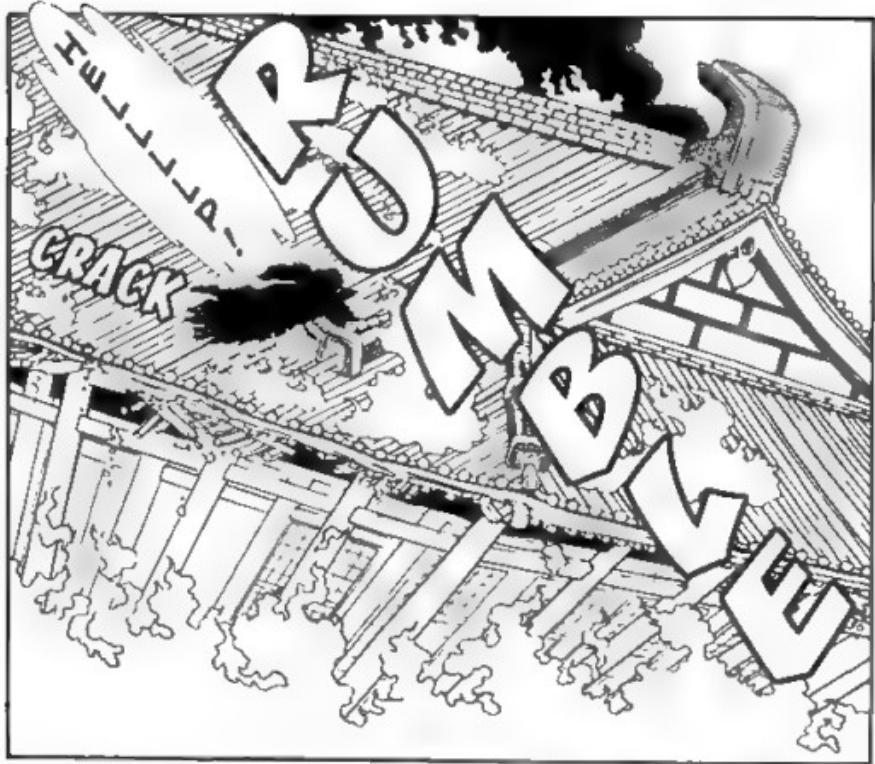










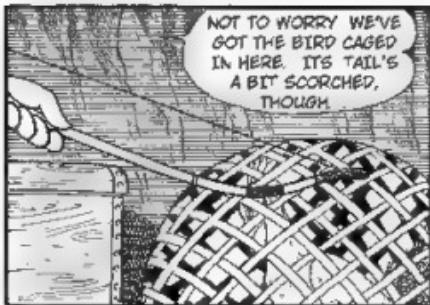


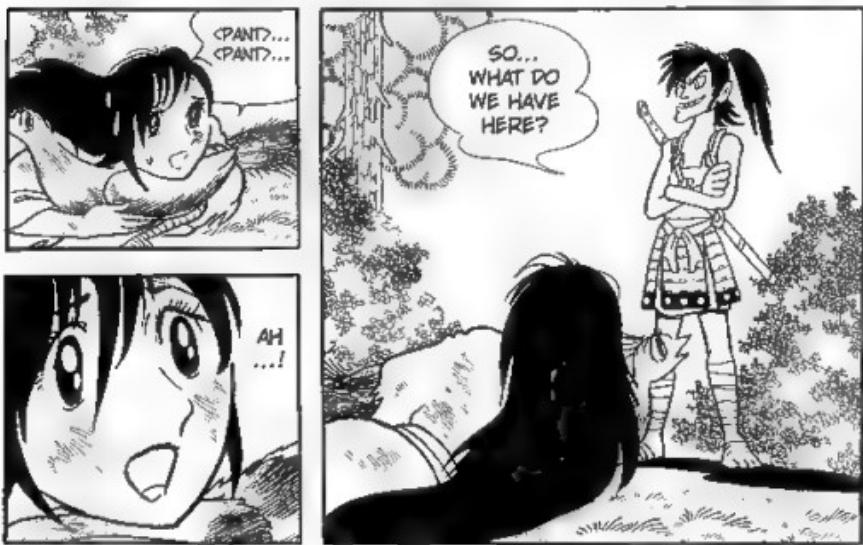
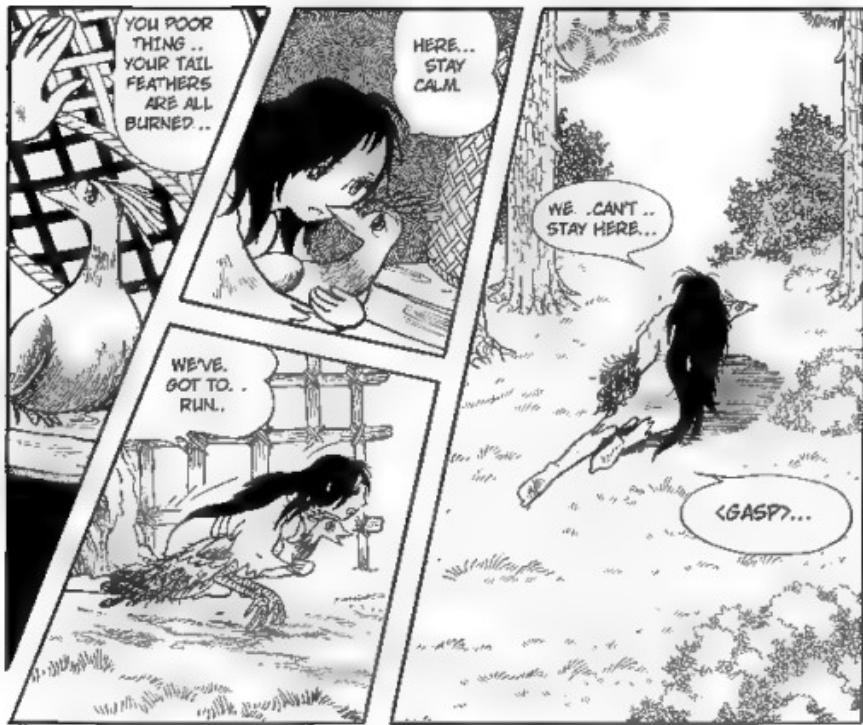


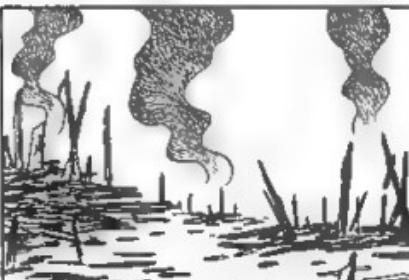
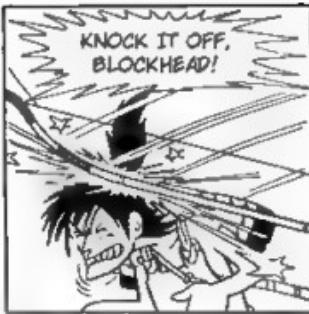




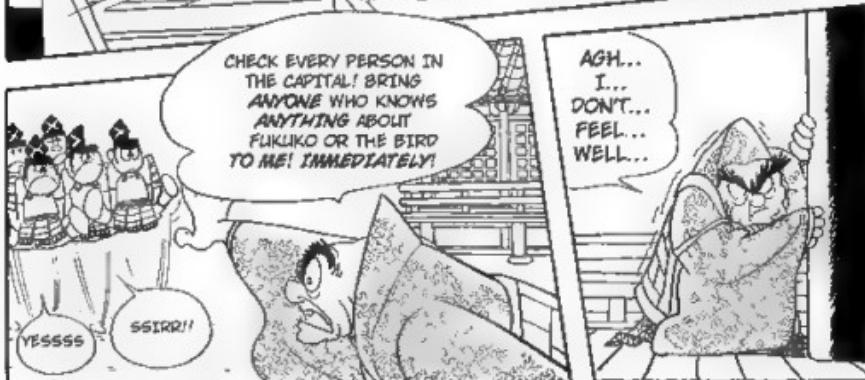
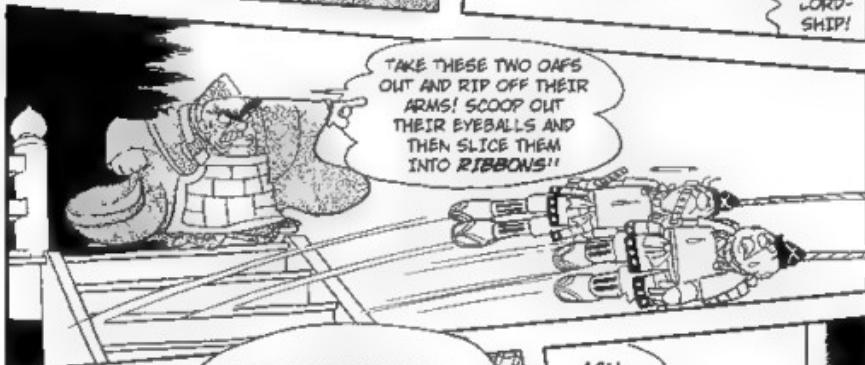
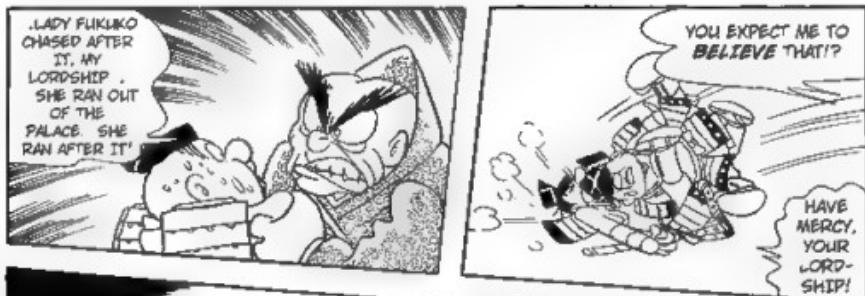












THIS BEGGAR MONK SAYS HE SPOTTED THEM BOTH AT THE HORIKAWA PALACE, LORDSHIP.

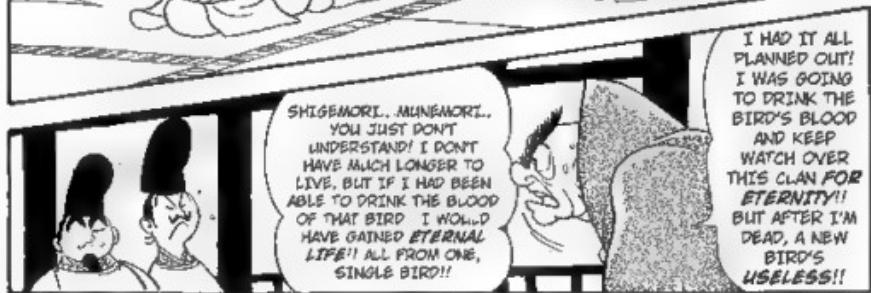
SHE FOLLOWED THE BIRD INTO THE FIRE, YOU SAY?

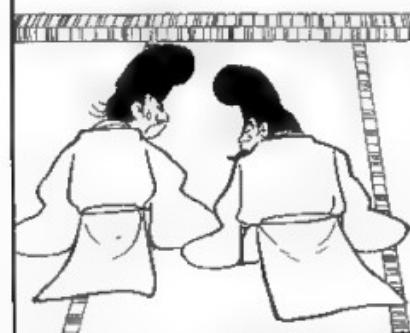
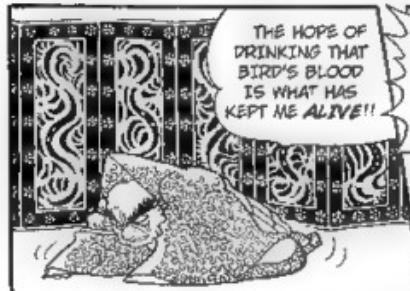
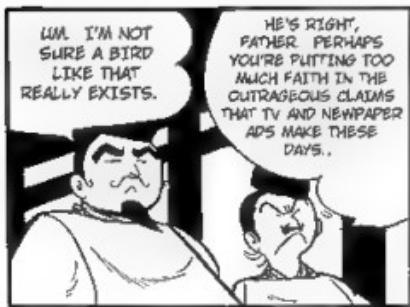
Y.. YES,
LORDSHIP ..
A COURT LADY
WAS CHASING
AFTER A BIG
BIRD, AND SHE
DOVE RIGHT
INTO THE
INFERNO.
I TRIED TO
STOP HER,
BUT FAILED...

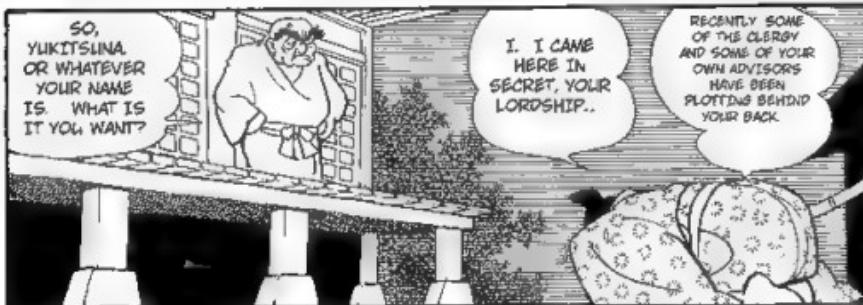
AND , WHAT
HAPPENED
TO THE
HORIKAWA
PALACE?

IT .. IT'S
NOTHING BUT
ASHES NOW, MY
LORDSHIP .

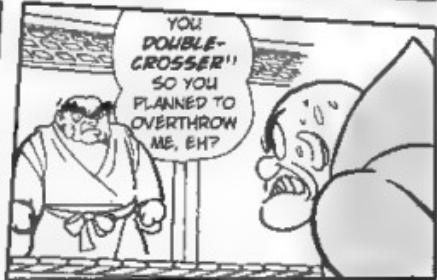
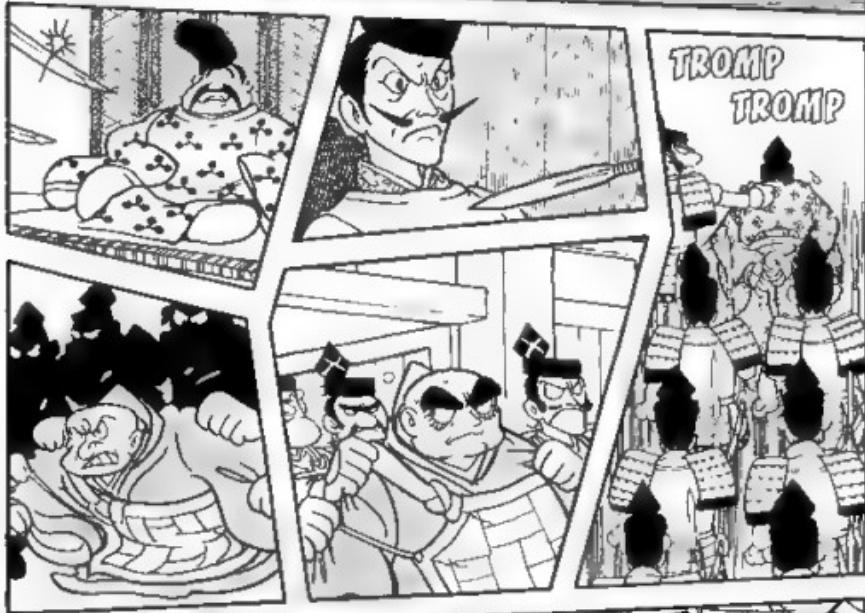
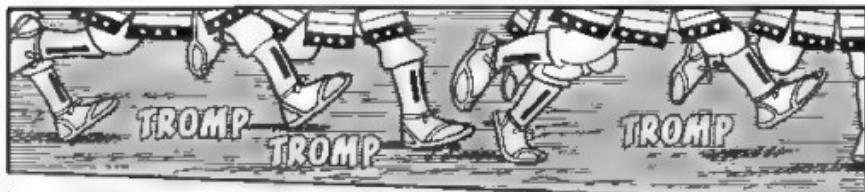
NOOOOO...!



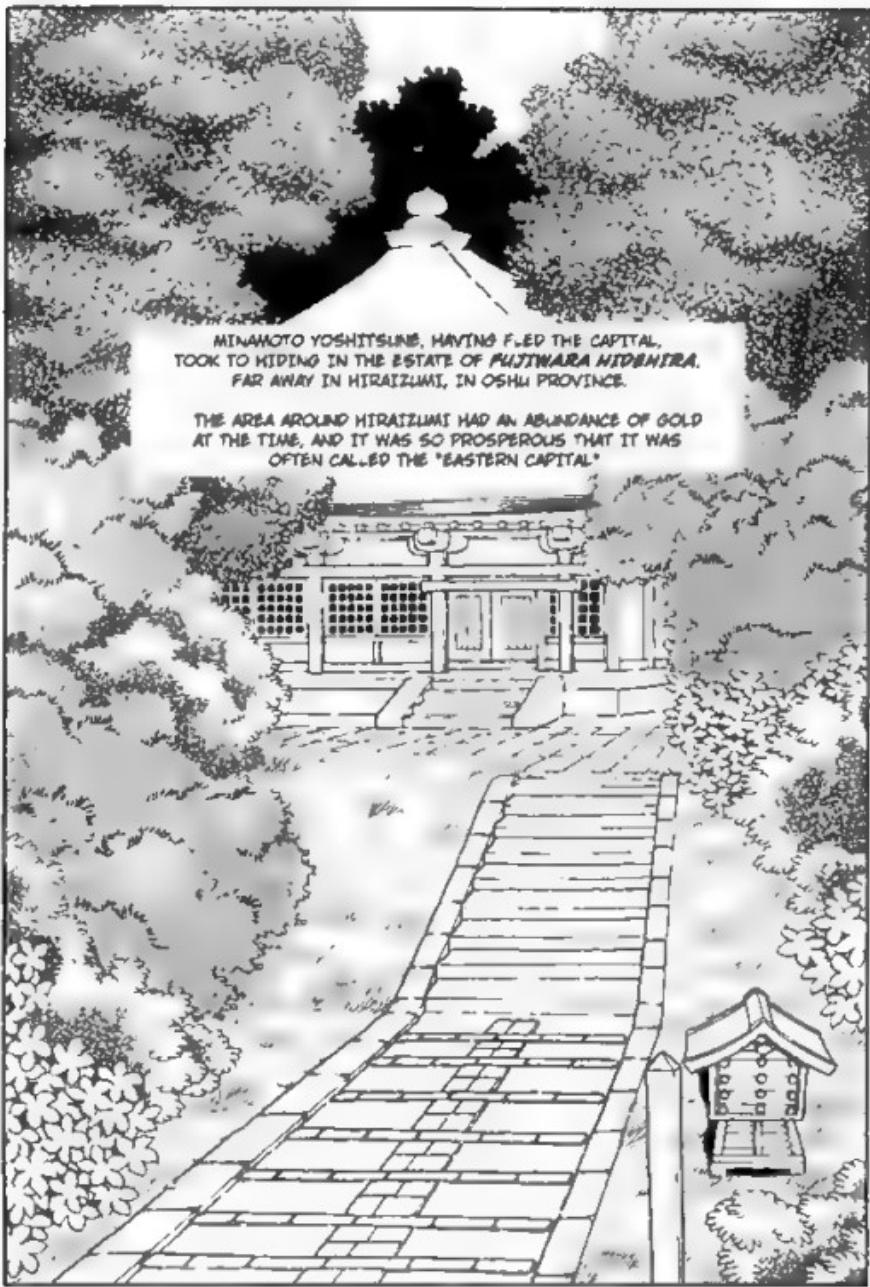












MINAMOTO YOSHITSUNE, HAVING FLED THE CAPITAL,
TOOK TO HIDING IN THE ESTATE OF FUJIWARA HIDENBIRA,
FAR AWAY IN HIRAIKUMI, IN OSHU PROVINCE.

THE AREA AROUND HIRAIKUMI HAD AN ABUNDANCE OF GOLD
AT THE TIME, AND IT WAS SO PROSPEROUS THAT IT WAS
OFTEN CALLED THE "EASTERN CAPITAL".

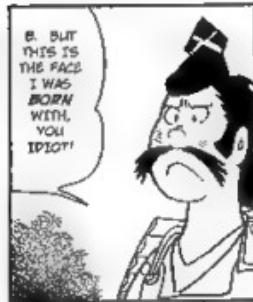
NEWS OF
WHAT HAD
HAPPENED
IN THE
CAPITAL.

FINALLY
REACHED
FUJIWARA
HIDEHIRA.

IIMORI
BENTA
YAMAZONO!
FROM THIS DAY
ON YOU'RE A
FUL-FLEDGED
SOLDIER OF
THE EASTERN
PROVINCES!

IF CLOTHES
MAKE THE
MAN, THEN I
GUESS ARMOR
MAKES THE
WOOD CUTTER,
EH? HA HA

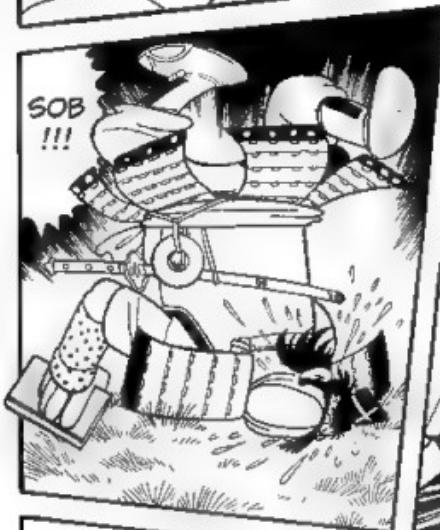
I'VE EVEN
ROUNDED UP
SOME MEN
FOR YOU TO
COMMAND!





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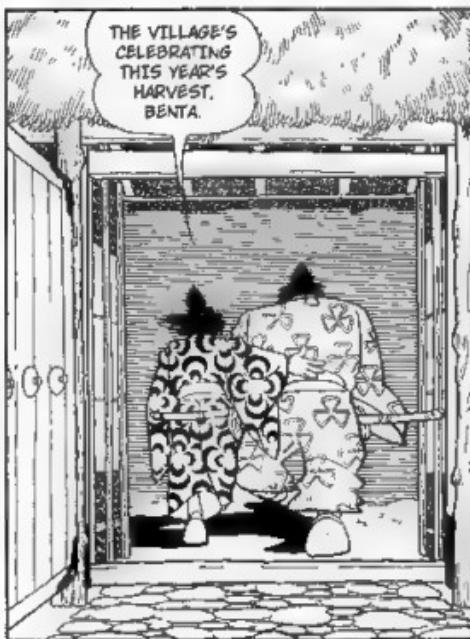
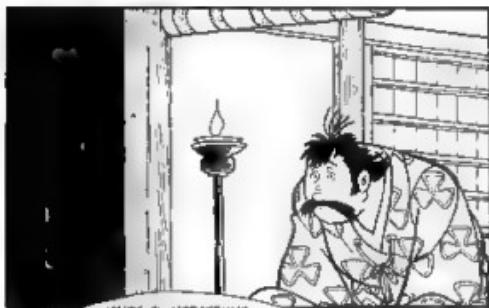




The image is taken at the beginning of the chapter, setting up the stage.

Since the dragon supports the dragon city, it may think you can

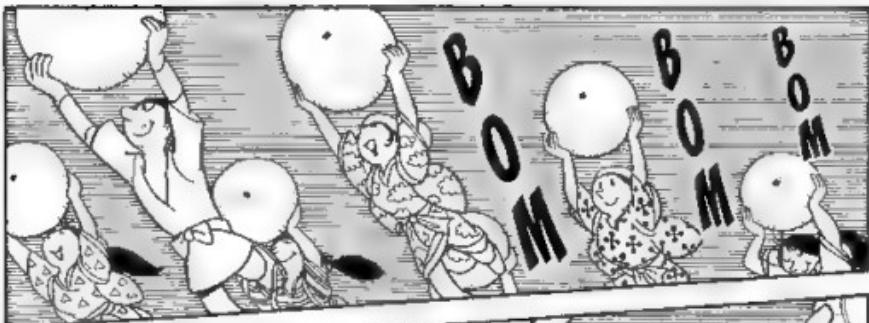
Trust me, I am a dragon and I am not afraid of dragons.



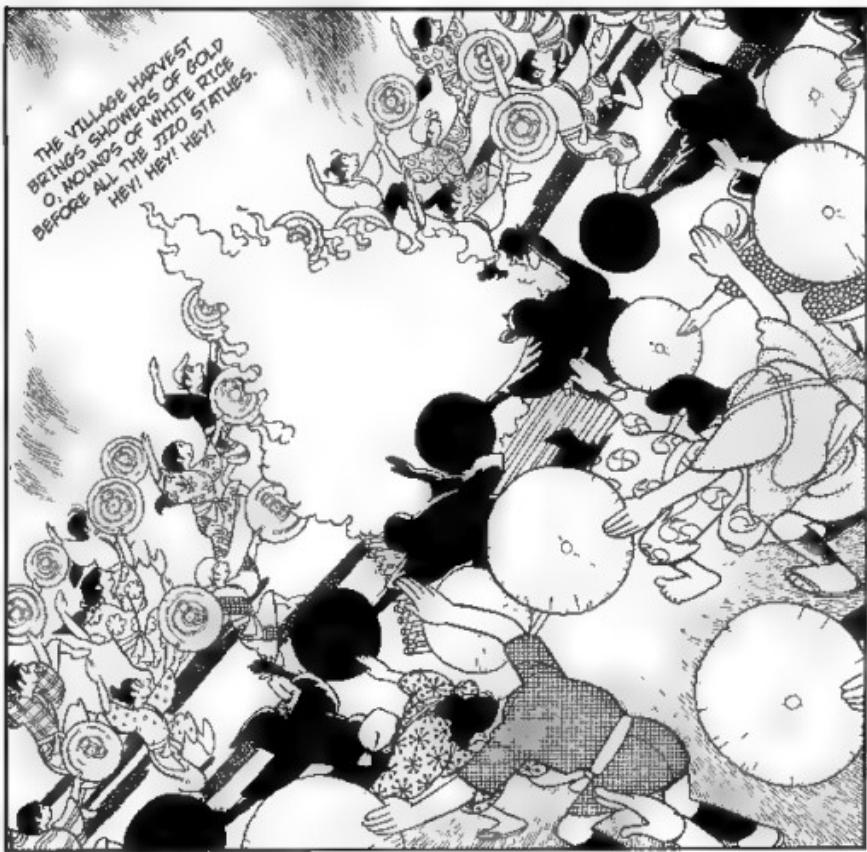
BOM, BOM, BOM, BOM!

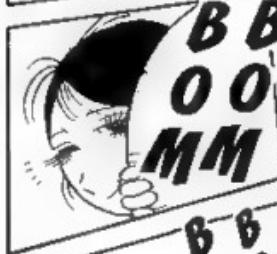
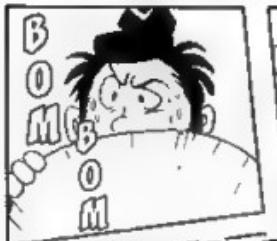


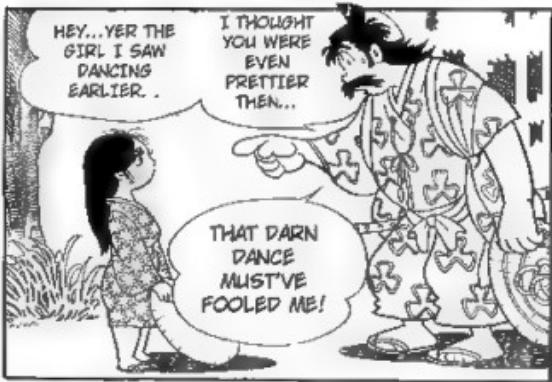


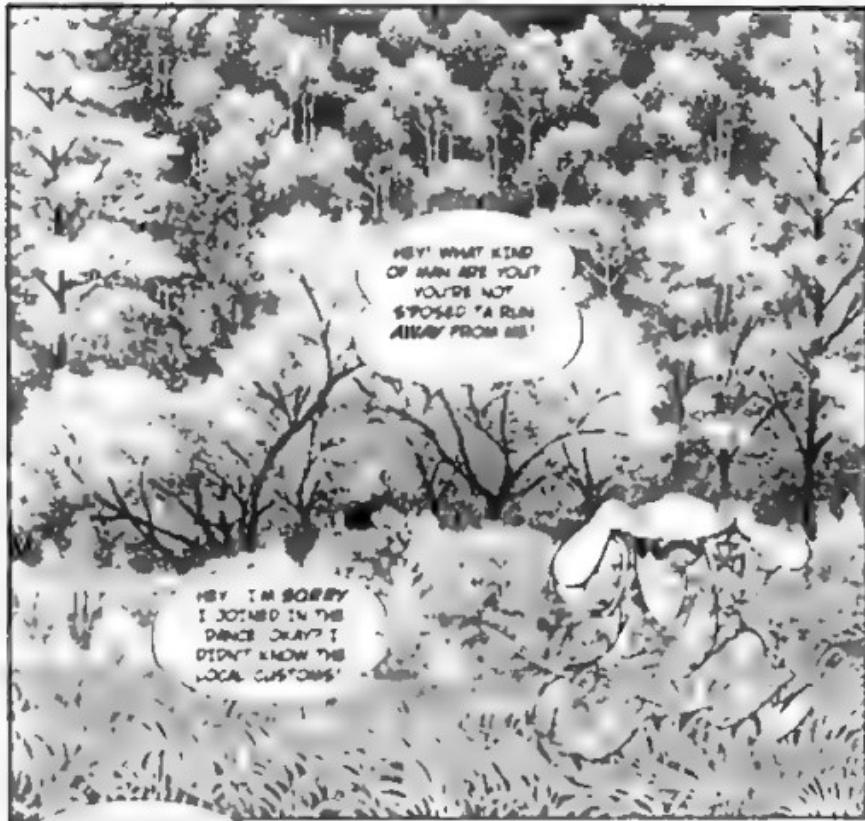












HEY, I'M SORRY
I JOINED IN THE
DANCE ORA'NT I
DIDN'T KNOW THE
LOCAL CUSTOMS'

OPHEW! LOOKS
LIKE I'VE FINALLY
LOST HER. BETTER
HIDE FOR A BIT



WOW I HAD NO
IDEA THE WOMEN
OF HERAZUMI
WERE THIS
DETERMINED!

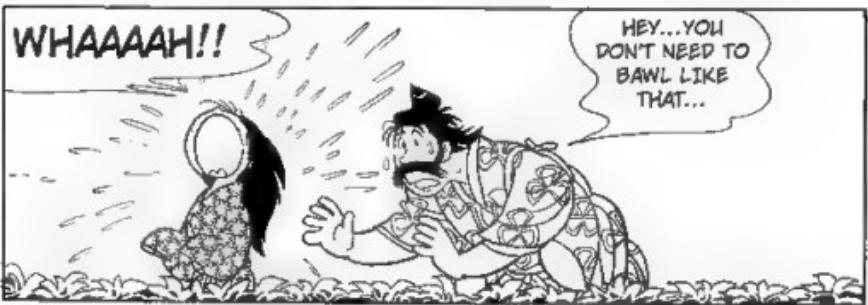
YOU'RE THE
ONE I CHOSE
AT THE DANCE
MR SAMURAI.
SO I'LL NEVER
LET YOU GO!

HEM HEM. SHE
DOESN'T KNOW
IT BUT I'M
REALLY A
WOODCUTTER.
AN I'M REALLY
GOOD AT
HIDING IN THE
MOUNTAINS!

HAVE TO
ADMIT IT
THOUGH. I
DO FEEL A
TAD SORRY
FOR THE
REST.

HMM.
WHAT'S
THIS?

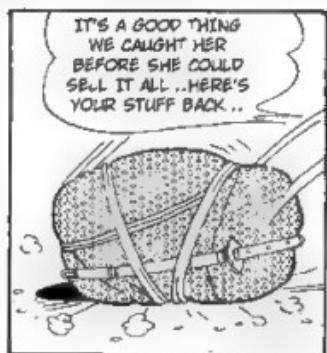


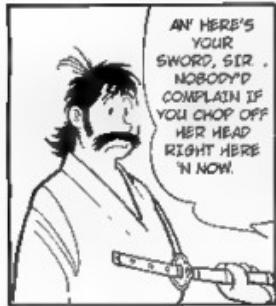


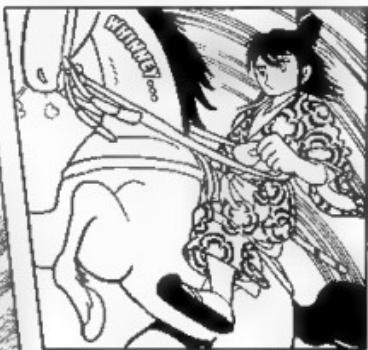
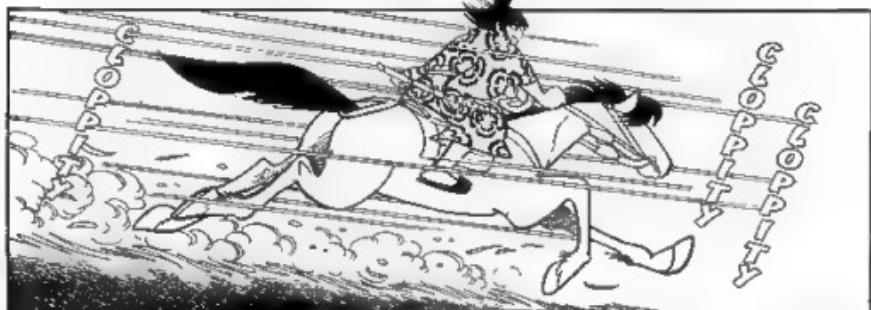


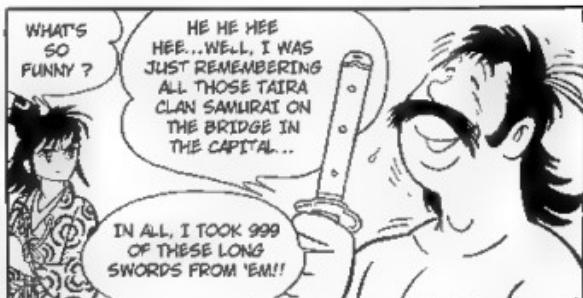
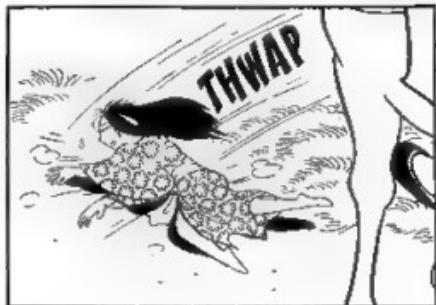


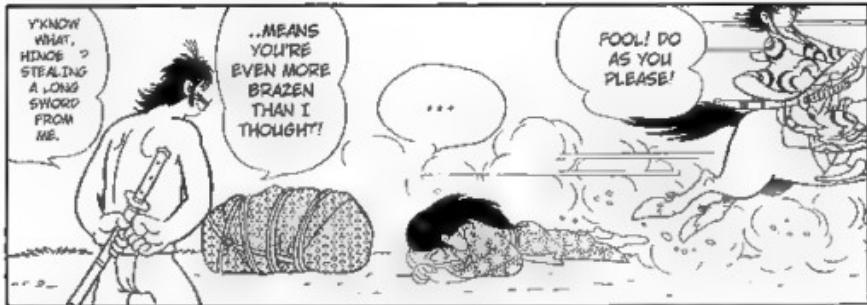


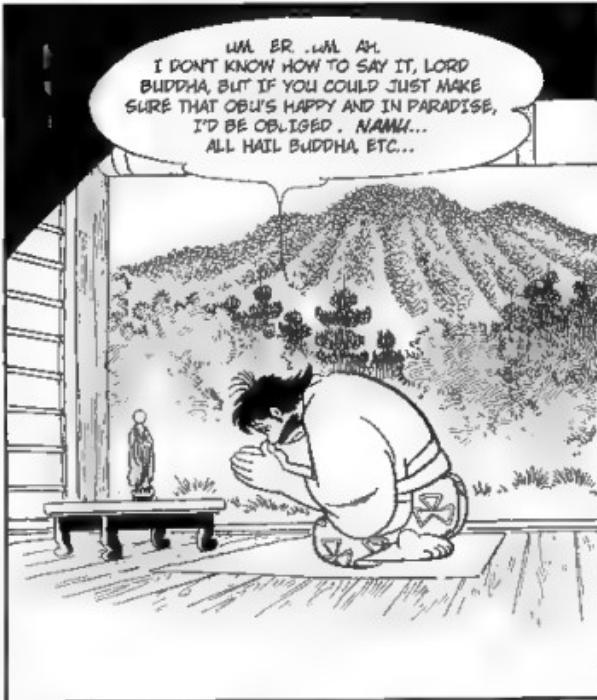






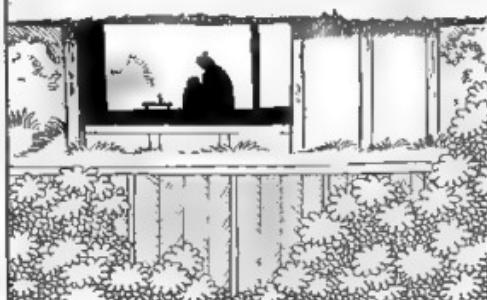
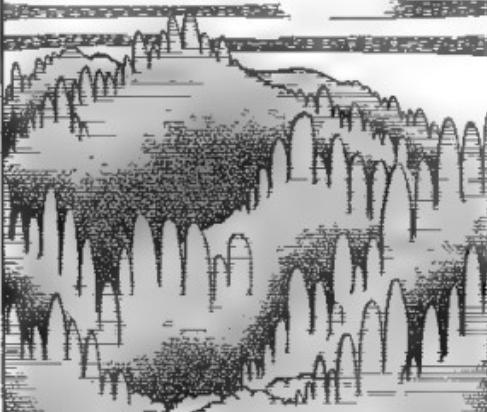


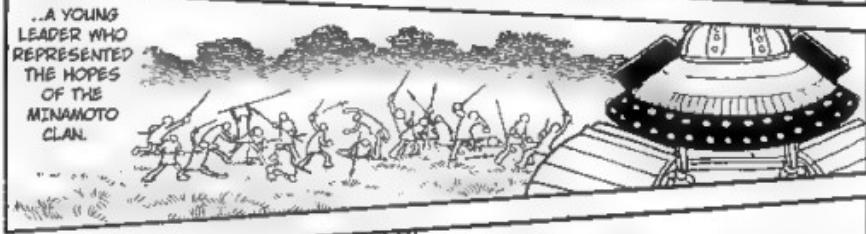
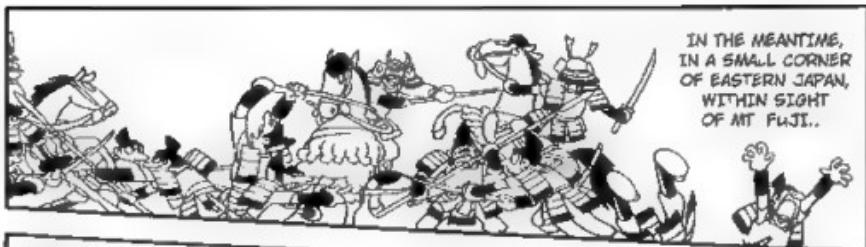






AND SO, FAR AWAY IN THE DISTANT MOUNTAINS, A STRANGE TWIST OF FATE BROUGHT A LONELY MAN AND A TROUBLED WOMAN TOGETHER, TO PRAY IN QUIET REVERENCE BEFORE A SMALL BUDDHIST IMAGE.

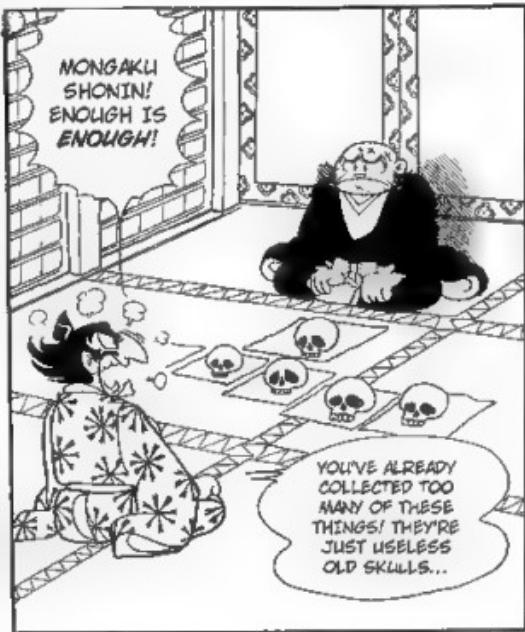




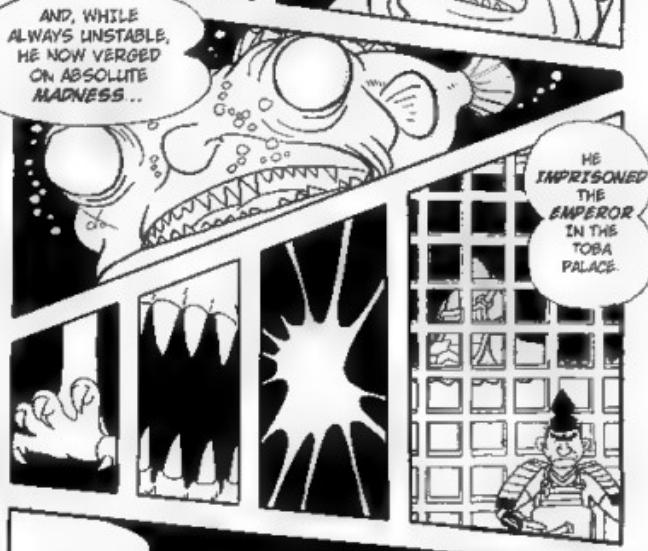
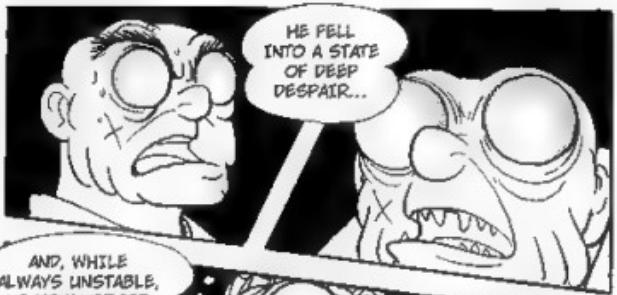












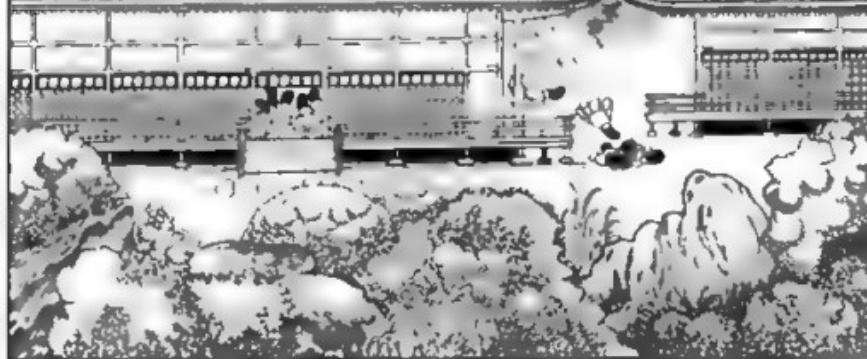
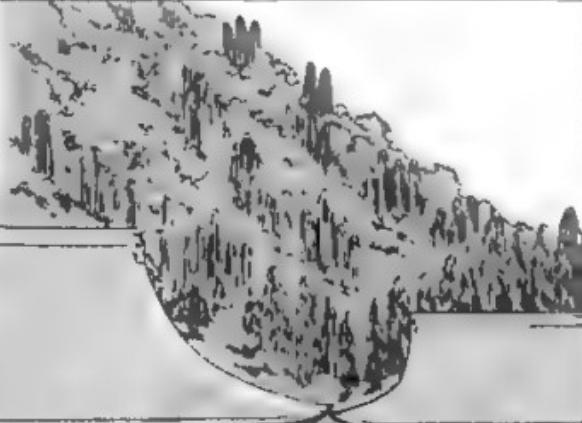


WHILE A REIGN
SWEPT UP IN THOSE
THE SEVEN SENGOKU
WARS, KIYOMOTO ALREADY
HAD HIS EYES ON THE
FUTURE. HE KNEW
HE COULD NOT HOPE
FOR MUCH IN THE
REST OF THE LIFE,
BUT HE HAD ONE
LAST DREAM. HE
THOUGHT HE HAD TO
BE AN IMPERATOR
TO A REIGN. IT'S TRUE
SUCH DREAMS ARE SOMETIMES
THE CAPITAL IS PROVERBIAL.

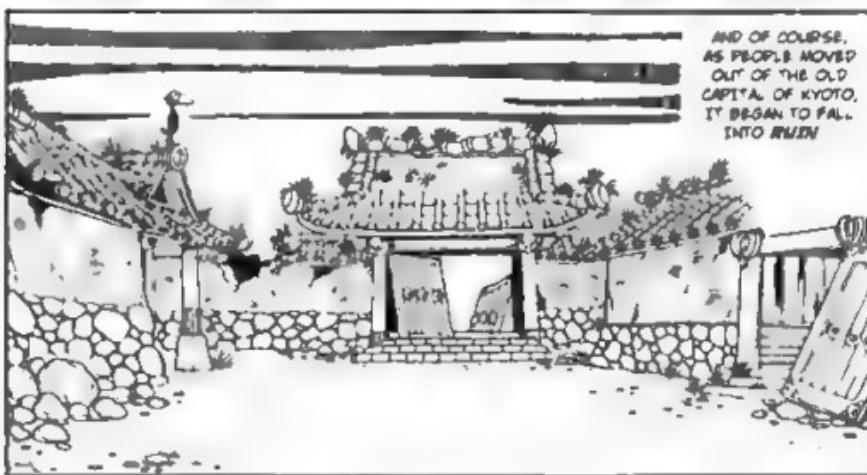


AND IN THE MIDST OF ALL
THIS TURMOIL, IN AN EVEN
MORE IRRATIONAL ACT
KIYOMOTO CONTINUED TO
Pursue His Plan To
RELOCATE THE CAPITAL
TO MIYAMASA.

FUKUWARA, NEAR THE PRESENT DAY PORT OF KOBE WAS ON A NARROW STRIP OF LAND BETWEEN THE MOUNTAINS AND THE SEA AS A RESULT THERE WAS ONLY ROOM TO BUILD A VERY SMALL CITY. EVEN IF KIYOMORI HAD SUCCEEDED IN MOVING THE WHOLE CAPITAL THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY LITTLE ROOM FOR ANYONE TO LIVE.



AND OF COURSE, AS PEOPLE MOVED OUT OF THE OLD CAPITAL OF KYOTO, IT BEGAN TO FALL INTO RUIN.





NOT SURPRISINGLY PERHAPS,
IN A SCANT FIVE MONTHS
KIYOMORI DECIDED TO MOVE
THE CAPITAL BACK TO KYOTO.
THE POOR EXHAUSTED PEOPLE
WERE ONCE MORE UPROOTED
AND FORCED TO RELOCATE.



WHAT COULD
POSSIBLY
HAVE CAUSED
SO MUCH
TROUBLE IN
THIS MAN'S
HEART?

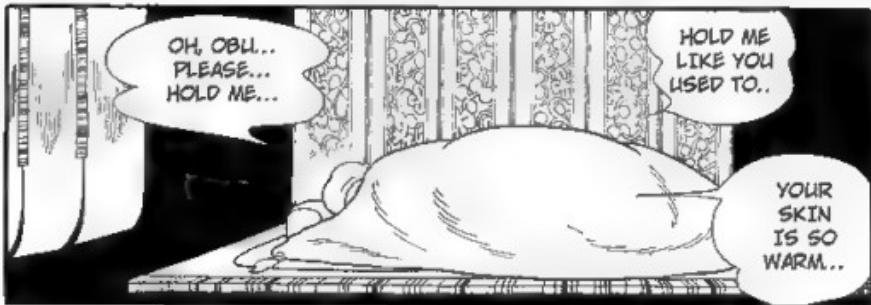
GASP!!

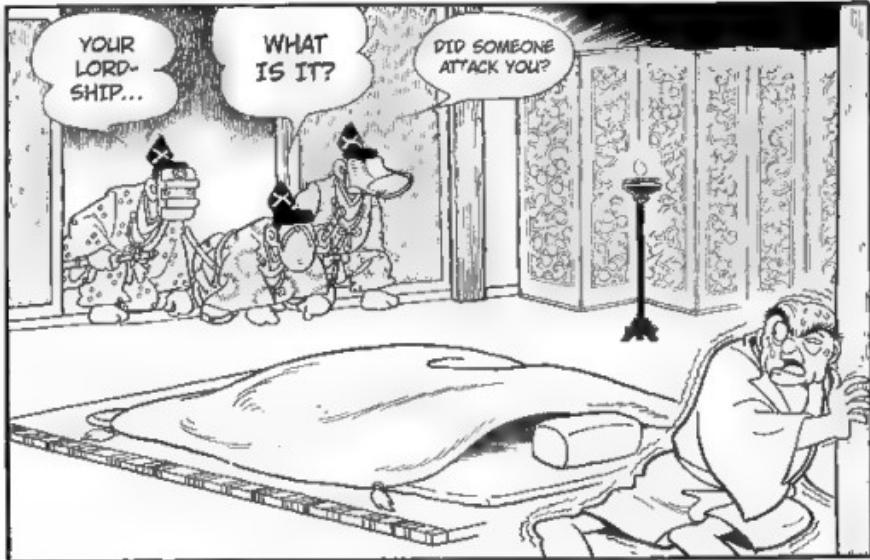
NO ONE
EVER
KNEW FOR CERTAIN.

HOWEVER, ONE PERSON IS SAID TO HAVE OVERHEARD SOMETHING KIYOMORI MUMBLLED, AS HE GAZED OVER THE SEA ON A DARK NIGHT IN SUMA.

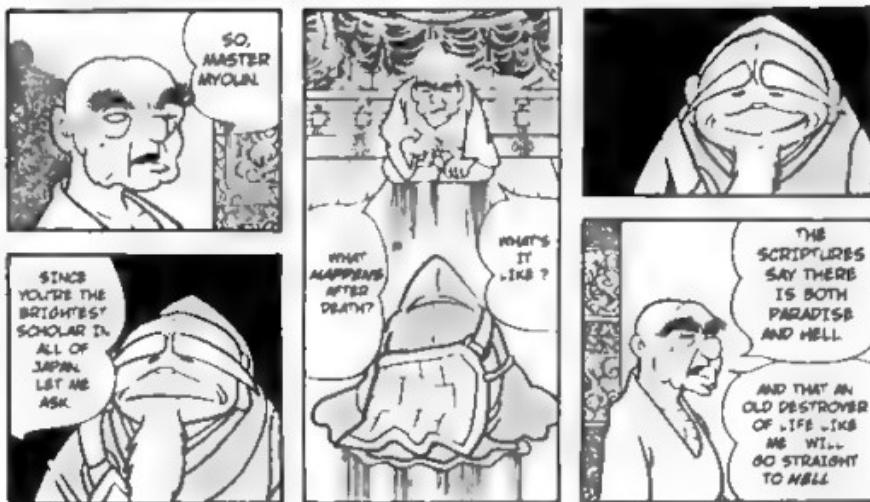
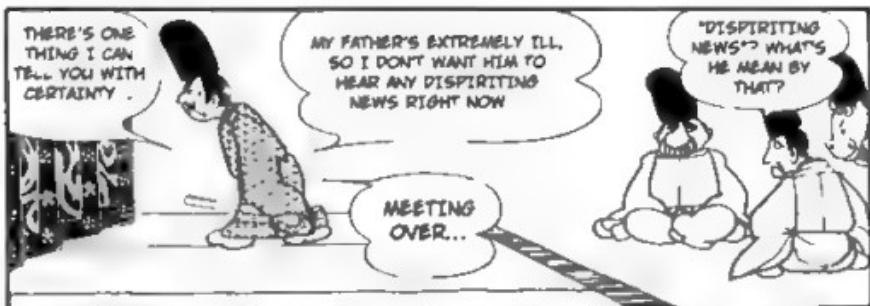














YOU MAY
LEAVE NOW
MASTER
MYOUN

AM THE ODDS
OF THAT ARE EVEN
SMALLER THAN OF
WINNING THE
GRAND PRIZE IN
THE LOTTERY.
THERE IS NO
GUARANTEE AFTER
ALL THAT YOU'LL
EVEN COME BACK
AS A HUMAN.

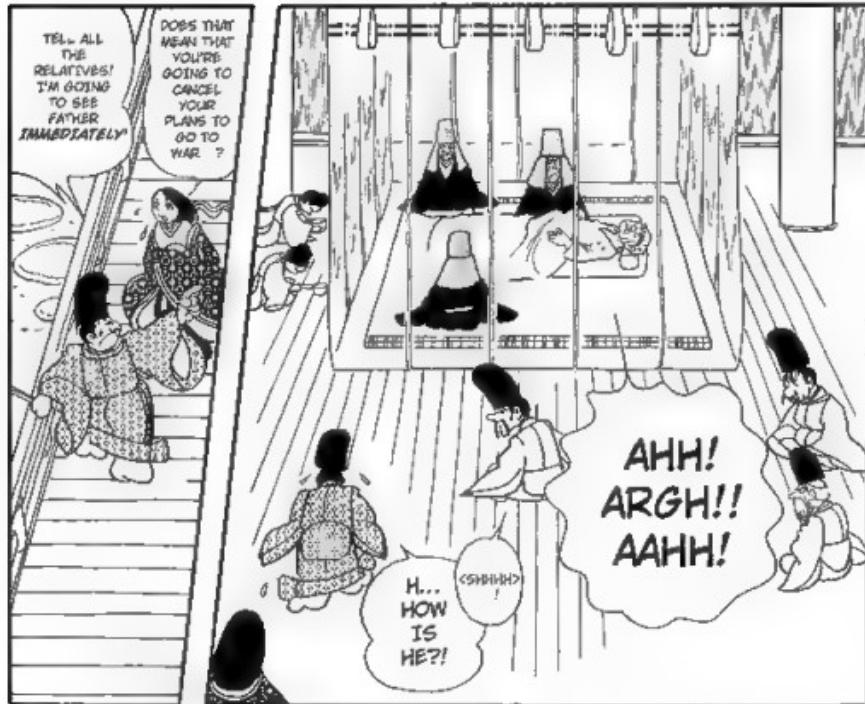
SO WHAT
ARE MY
CHANCES
OF COMING
BACK AS A
DESCENDANT
OF THE
TAIRA?

YOU
MIGHT BE
REINCARNATED
AS A LITTLE
WORM.

OR
MAYBE A
FISH..

WELL, IF I CAN'T COME
BACK AS A HUMAN...
I'D SETTLE FOR A BIRD!
I'D SEARCH THE SKIES
UNTIL I FIND THE BIRD
OF FIRE AND THEN I'D
TELL IT: "O LOVELY BIRD,
PLEASE SHARE YOUR
BLOOD WITH THE
TAIRA CLAN."





AS PRIME
MINISTER
KIYOMORI
NEARED
DEATH, IT IS
SAID THAT
HIS BODY
RADIATED SO
MUCH HEAT
THAT NO ONE
COULD STAND
TO BE
WITHIN
THIRTY FEET
OF HIM.





ABOUT THIS EDITION OF PHOENIX: **CIVIL WAR: PART 1**

The 12 self-contained yet interlinked stories that comprise *Phoenix* (Hi no tori in Japanese, literally "Firebird") is considered by many to be the summit of Osamu Tezuka's artistic achievement. Tezuka himself referred to *Phoenix* as his "life work." Painstakingly composed over a span of decades (initial versions appeared as early as 1954), serialized in a number of venues, and left incomplete with Tezuka's death in 1989, *Phoenix* represents Tezuka's ambitious attempt to push all he knew about the comic medium to address fundamental questions about existence.

All 12 stories in *Phoenix* are linked by the presence of the mythical bird, an immortal guardian of the universal *Hinomoto*. Read in order, the separate stories jump across time, alternating between a distant future and a distant past, converging on the present, with characters from one story being reincarnated in another. The existing twelve stories, totaling over three thousand pages of work, are subtitled "Down," "Future," "Yamato," "Space," "Karma," "Resurrection," "Robe of Feathers," "Nostalgia," "Civil War," "Life," "Strange Beings," and "Sun."

This edition, *Phoenix: Civil War: Part 1*, is an English translation of the eighth of the 12 *Phoenix* stories: A 27-page excerpt from Dadakai's translation of "Karma," which was printed in Frederik L. Schodt's *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*. "Phoenix: Civil War: Part 1" was first serialized in 1978-80 in *Manga Shōgeki Magazine*.

A Journey through Time and Space: An Overview of the Complete Phoenix Saga

“Phoenix” is a story about mythical bird known as historical-narrative about nothing that has come before it. The book is a collection of various stories from Japanese literature.

Dawn (1967)

240-270 A.D.

The era of Queen Himiko of the Yamatai Kotzu. The work quotes from the accounts of the Gishiwajinden. Also uses accounts from the legend of Amaterasu.



The scene in the Amaterasu myth where Himiko

captures herself to Amaterasu. On the left, a solar eclipse occurs.

Yamato (1968-69)

320-350 A.D.

Based on the legend of Yamato-takeru-no-mikoto. The dates above were inferred from the account of Old Man Takeku, and from information in Dawn.



Disguised as a woman, Prince Yamato Ojina approaches the Chieftain of the Kumaso and stabs him. As told in the Nihon Myth, the prince gets the name Taimon from his opponent right before he dies.



Karma (Hou-ou)

(1969-70) 720-752 A.D.

The complicated drama of the spirit of two Buddhist sculptors. Set in the Nara Period 710-794 during the national enterprise of the construction of the Great Buddha. Here the Hou-ou (a Chinese myth) is the Phoenix.



Akonomare, who has been ordered by the authorities to be in charge of the construction and design of the Great Buddha, is shocked when the statue sheds tears. The workers become frightened and the bizarre phenomenon halts construction.



Robe of Feathers (1971)

937-941 A.D.



A sci-fi version of the Hagoromo legend of Mio no Matsubara in Echizen (modern day Shizuka). Set during Taira no Kiyomori's rebellion which occurred during the Heian Period (898-1185).

The spirit of a woman swimming in the ocean is captured by the beauty of the white sand and gets pre-



Civil War (1978-80)

1172-1189 A.D.

The time of the Genpei-Kassen War between the Taira and the Genji after the fall of the Heiji (Taira Clan). Using the Heike Monogatari and Geki-ki as a backdrop, this story depicts "combat" as the life of living things.



Kei Watanabe depicts the Heiji and takes control of the capital. He cuts down the various monk Myouji. He came to the capital because he is after the Phoenix.

Strange Beings (1981)

1468-1498 A.D.

The Sengoku Period (482-558). Sakonosuke, the heir of General Yagi Imotsu, cuts down the nut. Yohikun who seems to be 800 years old. But she doesn't realize the true relationship between herself and the nut.



Sun (1986-88)

663-672 A.D.

The story begins after the defeat of the Japan-Kudara alliance at Hakusukino and Japan's withdrawal from the Korean peninsula, and ends with the struggle for the imperial throne during the Jimmu Rebellion.



Emperor Kurotsuké, formerly called Oshimo no Mikoto, is the cousin of Tachibana no Mikio, who is the son of Danzai no Mikio.

Future (1967-68) 3404 A.D.-infinity

The end of the future. Mankind is in decline and has become very conservative. The earth is run down and faces devastation. Eventually a nuclear war breaks out causing the end of everything.

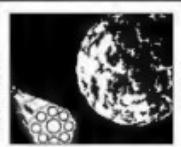


The Yamato Central Main Building Megapolis. Yamato is one of the few remaining underground cities of mankind.

FUTURE

Universe (1969) 2577 A.D.

In Orion, a sub-light speed rocket heading towards Earth crashes into a meteorite. The ship becomes unable to fly and four people manage to escape, including Saruta and Nana.



Each of the passengers escapes in an individual escape pod. However, the pods only have enough food for half a year and enough air for a year and a half. Possibilities of survival are...

Resurrection (1970-71) 2482-3344 A.D.

In the year 3344, Prof. Saruta lands on the moon. He meets and acquires Robita in his final form. Spanning 860 years, the end of this episode goes beyond Universe and close to the beginning of Future.



Robita and this rocket also make appearances in Future, where Robita stops Rock and then gets shot by him.

Nostalgia (1976-78) Indeterminate (approx. 25th century)

A Japanese woman named Romy establishes a civilization and history for the formerly uninhabited planet, Eden-17. Her husband dies of unnatural death, but the life she carries inside her...



The spaceship is headed for Eden-17. The shiny object in the foreground is the sun. The planet is surrounded by a revolving ring of space dust held there by gravity.

Life (1980) 2155-2170 A.D.

Human clones are being created, all for high ratings and a public-killing TV game show called *Clone Man Hunt*.



Animal clones were created for food. Human clones are created for a TV show—the cloning company president speaks as a sponsor. A terrifying plan for a TV show!

Sun (1986-88) 2008 A.D.

The "Light Tribe" acquires the Phoenix in space. However, they turn it into an icon and come to control society through religion. Non-believers are called "shadows" and are chased out to live underground.



The head temple of the "Light Tribe." A young shadow boy named Suguru endeavors to climb the great tower and steal the Phoenix.

AFTERWORD

By Takayuki Matsutani

"Tezuka-sensei came to Earth from a distant universe, and when his mission here was accomplished, he returned to outer space..." This notion was expressed several times in the tremendous flood of condolences given by intellectuals, artists, and others active in the fields of manga, film, music, and publishing when Osamu Tezuka passed away thirteen years ago. At the time, my grief over his death was so fresh I dismissed the idea as mere science-fiction fancy. Later, however, as I began sorting through Osamu Tezuka's legacy, I truly came to believe "Tezuka was a space alien"—it was the only adequate way of explaining his extraordinary artistry.

Look at *Phoenix*: I won't go into an analysis of the story; rather, I will just point out that it is one of many manga series he created, that during his career of forty-odd years, Tezuka drew 150,000 pages like those you see here. Simple arithmetic shows this comes out to ten pages a day—without a single day off! That's not all: Tezuka also produced over sixty animation titles (and *Astro Boy*, for instance, a TV series with two hundred episodes, is counted here as just one title!). Add to this over thirty books of prose, frequent television and radio appearances, lectures, interviews, and travels, not to mention stints as producer or director at various expos and other events...it seems impossible that one person could have done it all, yet Tezuka did. Moreover, he did it all himself, virtually without any help. Then consider the breadth of subjects and genres he tackled: historical works, contemporary issues, science fiction, politics, culture, education, character-based drama, epics, short stories, picture books for toddlers, mysteries, psychodramas, fantasy, nonsense, satire, and stories for boys, girls, young adults, and mature readers...in other words, everything under the sun.

It is extremely unfortunate that Tezuka did not live to see the 21st century, where so many of his stories are set.

In 2001, Japan entered an unprecedented economic recession, while the U.S. was assaulted on September 11 by terrorist attacks that far surpassed our wildest imaginings. These attacks then triggered the retaliatory war in Afghanistan, while in the Middle East the Israeli-Palestinian conflict escalated to new heights of violence. The 21st century has gotten off to a horrific start, and now in 2002, the countdown to Armageddon seems only to have accelerated. As globalization moves forward, the world is getting smaller and smaller. If Tezuka were alive today, how would he feel about all this? What kind of message would he send out to children through his works? Sadly, this is something we cannot know.

Although this *Future* takes place far beyond our time, in the third millennium A.D., Tezuka set *Astro Boy's* birthday in the opening years of the 21st century—April 7, 2003, to be exact—only fifty years ahead of the time *Astro Boy* began serialization in 1952. Just seven years after the devastation of World War II, when Japan was still a poor, scrabbling country, Tezuka imagined high-rises and underground cities, expressways snaking between skyscrapers, TV phones, trips to the moon, masses of industrial robots, and even a revolt by robots. Many of these things now actually exist in today's world, lending proof to Tezuka's astounding visionary powers. But even more extraordinary to my mind is the fact that, at a time when Japanese cities were still in ruins, when the Japanese people were living day-to-day and hand-to-mouth, and as such put economic recovery above all else, Tezuka—in such works as *Jungle Taitei* (which began serialization in 1950) and *Astro Boy*—was addressing environmental issues, calling for coexistence between human beings and other animals, and reminding us to take care of our precious planet Earth. These themes, which also dominate the *Phoenix* series, are the most pressing and relevant issues facing humanity today. That Tezuka's imagination could reach so far amidst the reality of 1950s Japan is the mark of genius.

Tezuka continued working up to three weeks before his death. As his strength waned, and he became too weak even to sit up in bed, he would still struggle with all his might to rise.

"I'm begging you, let me work!" were his final words. His wife desperately tried to calm him down, but Tezuka had

always been a workaholic, a man who worked without rest. What made Tezuka so compulsively creative, so urgently obsessive about his work?

Tezuka experienced World War II as a teenager. He spoke of having seen entire neighborhoods turned into a sea of flames by bombs and charred corpses lying on the streets afterwards. He remembered the deeply comforting sight of lights shining brightly in people's homes the night of August 15, 1945—the first night of peace. The war was finally over, the blackouts a thing of the past, and he savored the return of peace with profound gratitude. But at the same time, he swore to himself never to forget the tragic consequences of war, and to pass on his own experiences of war to the children of the future.

The next year, 1946, Tezuka was studying medicine at Osaka University and also made his debut as a professional manga artist. Although he did brilliant manga work and met with success, Tezuka finished his studies as well and obtained a physician's license. Medicine was, then as now, a highly respected and economically stable profession. In contrast, children's manga were dismissed as cheap entertainment; moreover, only a handful of people could make a living from drawing them. Even so, and in spite of the social conditions of the time, Tezuka chose manga over medicine.

Of course he loved drawing manga, probably loved it more than anything else. But I believe he was driven by something more than that: he chose manga because he felt it was his mission to spread the message of peace and respect for life to the children of the future. And Tezuka probably knew, better than anyone else, that he had staked his future on an amazing medium. Today, computer-enhanced Hollywood movies are taking the world by storm. With computer graphics, people can morph easily into different shapes and interact in the same frame with dinosaurs. Some say that manga and animation have lost their advantages and been surpassed. But for those of us who have read Tezuka's works, Hollywood has only now caught up, just barely, with the expressive capacity of manga. Over fifty years ago, Tezuka knew that manga—back then an art form still in its infancy—could express anything and everything the imagination could conjure, from the mundane to the utterly fantastic.

However, and this is probably the same all over the world, manga has always been viewed as inferior to other art forms, such as painting, prose, music, and theater. Manga was denounced by adults, who claimed it had a bad influence on children. Tezuka battled against the censure of these adults all his life, and this fight for acceptance was another driving force in his passion for work.

Some years ago, Japanese newspapers reported an incident in which children were told to bring all their manga books to school so they could throw them into a big bonfire in the yard. Yes, recent book-burnings in Japan focused on manga. I don't claim that all manga are good. As with any other art form, there is good work and bad work. But Tezuka, conscious of the average adult's bias toward manga, worked indefatigably to change that bias. Most important, of course, he created high-quality manga, but he also appeared frequently on TV, wrote essays and articles for magazines and newspapers, and did everything else he could in his crusade to bring manga the recognition if deserved as a legitimate art form.

In the year Tezuka died, a national art museum held an Osamu Tezuka exhibition. No museum of that stature had ever mounted a manga-related exhibition before. The culture of manga has been supported by many talented artists, most of them inspired by Tezuka, and today, there are numerous manga works that far outstrip novels and films in popularity, scope, and ambition.

The day after Tezuka passed away, a major newspaper eulogized him in an editorial, "Why do Japanese love manga so much? Foreigners apparently find it very strange to see adults engrossed in weedy comic magazines on the train... One explanation for this is that, in their countries, they did not have Osamu Tezuka." Not only was it extremely unusual for a major newspaper, let alone in an editorial, to discuss manga or a manga artist, but this was praise of the highest sort. Yes, manga in Japan today have earned a secure place as a respectable art form.

Osamu Tezuka devoted his entire life to manga, and *Phoenix* is one of his representative works. I hope you enjoy it.

Takayuki Matsutani

President, Tezuka Productions

Translated from the Japanese by Akemi Wagatsuma

PHOENIX AND ME

By Osamu Tezuka



The serialization of *Jungle Taitei* in *Shonen Jump* ended in 1954, and I was at a loss as to what to create next.

Then I saw Stravinsky's famous ballet, *L'oiseau de Feu*. Of course the ballet itself was excellent, but I was especially intrigued by the prima ballerina dancing as the spirit of the phoenix.

The ballet is based on an old Russian legend about a prince that has been captured by a demon. The spirit of the phoenix saves the prince by acting as a guide for his escape. I thought that this passionate, elegant, and mysterious bird would make a wonderful main character comparable to the likes of Leo from *Jungle Taitei*.

Actually, every country has a legend about a mysterious bird such as the phoenix. In these legends, the symbol of supernatural lifeforce takes form as a bird, such as the immortal bird called the Hoo-ou from the legend of Houou-san.

I wanted to utilize this phoenix to portray Japanese history in my own way. The theme would be about man's attachment to life and the complications that arise from greed. The phoenix would be the vehicle that would bring it all together.

As a new challenge, I wanted to start by creating the beginning and then the end of a long story. The story would then return to an ancient period right after the dawn of man. I would then continue to go back and forth between past and future. In the end, I would set the story where past and future converge—the present. This story, set in the present, would tie all the previous stories together to form a long drama running from the dawn of man all the way to the distant future.

Each story would stand on its own and seem to have nothing to do with the other stories, but the final story would tie everything together—and for the first time, the reader would realize that the structure of the series is such that each story would be just one part of a much longer story. After all, man's history does not have clear divisions or breaks.

Each episode would portray life from various angles and set up different problems. Moreover, the style of each of the episodes would vary from one another, covering a range of genres: science-fiction, war story, mystery, comedy.

I don't know how many more years *Phoenix* will continue, but after it is completed, please go back and read through the whole series again. Otherwise, it will be difficult for me to respond to criticism.

Osamu Tezuka, December 1969

Translated from the Japanese by Andy Nakatani